

Hafa Adai!

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OPINION METER

This week's poll:
Where should the governor deliver his State of the Commonwealth Address this year?

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INSIDE



Flight Blues

Survey says late flights, lost bags and higher fares are making air travelers grumpy.

BUSINESS...Page 13

Oldest Person

Kaku Yamanaka, Japan's oldest person, has died of old age in central Japan. She was 113.

ASIA...Page 15



Love of Dog

'I was alone. I was scared. And I was going to die that way.'

LIFE & STYLE...Page 18



⚡ The 1-percent decline in the government's resources is an indicator that the economic worst is behind us. ⚡

—Gov. Benigno R. Fitial

FY09 budget plan: \$158.4M



HAFA ADAI!

The USS *Curts*, a 453-foot guided missile frigate with 226 officers and crew, is seen docked at the Port of Saipan upon its arrival on Sunday. This is the *Curts*' first visit to Saipan. It will depart the island on April 9. Inset shows a U.S. Navy personnel on guard duty aboard the USS *Curts*.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Reyes files Bar complaint vs 2 lawyers

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Press secretary Charles P. Reyes Jr. has filed a complaint before the CNMI Bar Association against lawyers Stephen J. Nutting and

James Sirok for alleged unprofessional conduct.

Reyes, as executor of the estate of his father, Charles Reyes, asked the CNMI Bar Association to sanction Nutting and Sirok for violation of professional conduct and to stop

them from doing further harm to the heirs of his father's estate.

Nutting said it is worth noting that "all the claims are frivolous."

"Mr. Reyes is represented by a very capable counsel and none of

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Reyes

BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS

- Unpaid holidays
- 12 austerity Fridays
- 11 percent Fund contribution rate
- Expanded reprogramming authority
- Continued operation of some garment factories
- Slight growth in tourist arrivals
- Suspension of earmarking laws

By **AGNES E. DONATO**
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Benigno R. Fitial is requesting a budget of \$158.4 million for fiscal year 2009, a slight decrease from the spending limit for the past two years.

See FY09 on Page 4

Saipan gaming proposal back from the dead

By **AGNES E. DONATO**
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A new Saipan gambling bill has been introduced in the House of Representatives.

The measure, titled the "Video Gaming and Entertainment Card Games Act of 2008," proposes to legalize casino gaming on Saipan, particularly at the for-

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Nine govt employees test positive for drugs. PAGE 2
Palms Resort's former HR chief arrested. PAGE 3

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Local

Nine govt employees test positive for drugs

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Nine government employees tested positive during random drug tests conducted by the Office of Personnel Management between 2005-2007.

Alcohol and Drug Free

Workplace director Frances Torres-Salas said the nine were identified from a total of 300 drug tests conducted on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota.

Individuals were tested for the presence of cocaine, marijuana, opiates, amphetamines, and phencyclidine in their urine.

"All government employees are subjected to a random drug test if they are identified to be 'safety-sensitive' personnel or hold a 'safety-sensitive' position," Torres-Salas said.

Safety-sensitive positions include law enforcement officers and bus drivers, among others.

Random tests are done on a quarterly basis, and an average of about 60 tests are conducted per quarter.

Torres-Salas said if an employee is found to be under the influence of prohibited drugs or substances—depending upon the reason for taking the test—

some form of disciplinary action is taken.

Some seek rehabilitation at the Community Guidance Center and are certified to return to duty while others face termination.

OPM performs drug testing on pre-employment, random, reasonable suspicion and post-accident and covers permanent status employees and excepted service employees.

Tests cost about \$35.50 and results may be expected within seven working days from the time it was conducted.

"Since the CNMI Drug Testing Policy is mirrored after the U.S. Department of Transportation's Drug Testing policy, federal standards are followed with regards to drug testing procedures," said Torres-Salas.

She added that the certified laboratory has to conduct the test itself and since there is no certified toxicology laboratory in the CNMI, the specimens are sent off-island for toxicology screening.

According to the OPM, the purpose of a random drug test is to ensure that employees as well as the public work in a safe environment.

OPM oversees and administers the CNMI government's Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace Policy.

The policy covers the employees of the Executive Branch but OPM also services several other government agencies outside the realm of the Executive Branch, which is done through a Memorandum of Understanding.

Release of bio-control insects to eradicate invasive weed OK'd

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has allowed the islands of Guam and the CNMI to breed and release a non-indigenous insect that is said to help control infestations of an invasive weed throughout the islands.

According to the USDA, the non-indigenous insect with the scientific name *Heteropsylla spinulosa* is used to reduce the severity and extent of infestation of a non-indigenous plant in the CNMI called the *Mimosa diplotricha*.

The *M. diplotricha* is a major pest of agriculture, pastures, wastelands, and roadsides. It scrambles over and smothers other plants.

Thickets of the tangled stems

can injure humans and trap animals. The USDA stated in its March 2008 environmental assessment that, "it is a serious tropical plantation weed in the Pacific islands infesting rubber, coconut, and sugarcane fields." Also, when the plant dies and dries up it becomes a fire hazard.

The *M. diplotricha* has sharp, hooked prickles. Leaves are alternate, bright green feathery and fern-like. Leaflets close up when disturbed, injured, or at nightfall. Their stems bunch, often scrambling over other plants.

The *M. diplotricha* is not indigenous to the CNMI.

The USDA decision last week would allow the introduction of laboratory rearing and release of *Heteropsylla spinulosa*.

Northern Marianas College-Cooperative Research Extension

and Education Services entomologist Dr. Joaquin Tenorio said the *M. diplotricha* is all over the place in agricultural areas throughout the CNMI.

"Because these plants grow very tall in a vine or in a bush, many farmers have to wear thick clothing or they get thorns everywhere. They are also a nuisance to cattle that roam farm areas and are very hard to control," Tenorio said.

It has been estimated that over 350 acres on Saipan, 370 acres on Tinian, and 300 acres on Rota are infested with this nuisance weed.

Tenorio said that NMC-CREES is currently waiting for the official permit from the USDA before going ahead with the release of the bio-control. The permit is expected to arrive

by the end of this month or early next month.

"When we receive that permit, we will then go out and gather these insects from their original areas," Tenorio said.

He said that NMC-CREES is planning to gather them from either Pohnpei or the Federated States of Micronesia.

When asked that if these non-indigenous insects will someday become a nuisance in the CNMI, Tenorio said that the USDA received all the testing of the insect from Australia, Pohnpei and Palau and has decided that "they do not and will not become a nuisance."

"Nothing will become approved for introduction by the USDA if it does not complete necessary assessment," Tenorio said.

AGO: Initiative will turn DOL into 'piggy bank' for govt debt

By AGNES E. DONATO
agnes_donato@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Office of the Attorney General has opposed an initiative that will allow government to pay its debts using funds generated through leasing public lands.

Attorney General Matthew Gregory said the proposal would restrain the Department of Public Lands from dealing with potential developers, and from availing of federal aid for homesteads.

See AGO on Next Page

An event to benefit higher education in the Northern Mariana Islands

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Awards dinner will be held same date at Hyatt Regency Saipan 6pm - Poolside




Palms Resort's ex-HR chief arrested

Suspect allegedly used position in credit card misuse

By **FERDIE DE LA TORRE**
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Police arrested Friday afternoon the former human resources director of Palms Resort Saipan who allegedly used her position at Palms to open a credit card account using another employee's name.

Eva L. McKinney, 40, was apprehended for theft, theft by deception, and misuse of credit cards.

Police investigation is still ongoing whether McKinney also possibly victimized other employees of Palms Resort, *Saipan Tribune* learned.

At yesterday's hearing, Superior Court associate judge Ramona V. Manglona kept the bail at \$5,000 cash, as the court had earlier imposed. Manglona set the preliminary hearing for April 16 at 9am.

Detective Patrick Earl Maanao stated in his report that the Palms Resort management discovered the alleged credit card misuse when the victim, Nelly Bumanglag, received a billing statement that said she owed over a thousand dollars. Police said that McKinney would usually intercept the billing statement but on that particular day, she was off duty.

Maanao said that McKinney, as then human resources director of Palms Resort (formerly Hotel Nikko Saipan), had full access of each of the employees' personnel file.

The defendant allegedly obtained the social security number of Bumanglag and applied for an American Express Card. McKinney used



FERDIE DELA TORRE

Eva L. McKinney, a former human resources director of Palms Resort Saipan who allegedly used her position at Palms to open a credit card account using another employee's name, covers her face as she is led out of the court after her bail hearing yesterday.

her name as the second cardholder, Maanao said.

The defendant allegedly used the hotel's mailing address so that she could intercept Bumanglag's billing statement before the employee gets them.

However, last March 28, Bumanglag received from her supervisor a billing statement from American Express Card. When she opened the statement, Bumanglag was surprised to see that she had accumulated charges of \$1,124.52.

Investigation showed that the victim received the billing because McKinney was not on duty on the day the mail was being passed out to each of the employees, Maanao said.

Follow-up investigation showed that the amount owed on the AmEx card is actually higher than the first billing statement as a recent billing statement showed \$1,193.52.

The detective said he started investigating the case Friday

morning when Department of Public Safety Criminal Investigation Division chief Maj. Edward H. Manalili informed him

about the scheme.

Maanao said it was Palms Resort Saipan assistant general manager Ray de la Cruz

who went to Manalili's office a day earlier (Thursday) to report the incident.

Maanao said that on Friday he went to Palms Resort where he was informed that McKinney was terminated as of April 1, 2008, because of the incident.

The detective quoted the hotel's general manager as saying that McKinney at first denied the allegations when he spoke to her but when the GM contacted their attorney, the defendant admitted she had applied for the credit card accessing the personal information of Bumanglag through personnel records.

Maanao said that, after interviewing de la Cruz and the general manager, he spoke to Bumanglag.

Bumanglag told him that she never applied for an American Express Card, but only a Visa. She had stopped the Visa last year. She said she never gave her consent to McKinney to apply for a credit card.

The detective said that two

other employees at Human Resources both stated that McKinney was very particular about the mail coming into the office.

Maanao said the two employees stated that McKinney did not want either of them to touch or distribute mails unless she reviewed them or she tells them to pass them out.

McKinney apparently would always receive phone calls from Dial Rent-To-Own and First Hawaiian Bank at least once or twice a week.

Maanao said that after the management terminated McKinney, another staff assisted Dela Cruz in clearing out the defendant's table last Thursday.

Maanao said Dela Cruz and the staff discovered other opened billing statements belonging to Bumanglag and other mails also belonging to another person.

The detective said he also received unopened mail belonging to Bumanglag with possibly a credit card inside.

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AGO

From Page 2

By allowing the Legislature to dip into funds that were previously off-limits, the initiative would turn the Department of Public Lands into a "piggy bank" for public debt, Gregory said.

Under the initiative proposed by Rep. Heinz Hofschneider, DPL will not be able to sell any land even to qualified buyers. The initiative will prohibit DPL from leasing out a property for less than 5 percent of its appraised value.

The initiative will also allow the Legislature to take at least \$2 million a year from DPL in order to retire debt. This comes in line with the proponent's stated intention of borrowing money for the repair of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.

According to Gregory, the initiative would hamper DPL's efforts to use funds from the Internal Revenue Service to build new homesteads. To be eligible for the funds, DPL needs to sell the land to the developer.

He added that since only

people of Northern Marianas descent are allowed to hold fee simple interests, the loss of such federal aid would deprive a locally owned business the opportunity to work on a large-scale construction.

Gregory argued that the proposed minimum rental for public lands may work to DPL's disadvantage.

"Limiting the department to only accepting rent in terms of 5 percent of the appraised value of the land limits the ability of the department to strike a deal on other grounds—such as a percentage of gross revenue," he explained.

Further, Gregory said that the provision allowing the CNMI government to use DPL funds to pay debt service will push the department to bankruptcy.

"Taking [at least] two million dollars a year from DPL in an effort to retire debt is a recipe for disaster if there is no guarantee that debts will not just continue to [mount]. Moreover, as the revenues of the department shrink under the burdens of the [initiative], there is no guarantee that there will be any money for the Legislature to take," he said.

Justices reverse heirship ruling

The CNMI Supreme Court has reversed the trial court's decision in a probate case that distributed land to an heir claimant.

The justices ruled that the claim of inheritance by Maria Dela Cruz Iglesias' heirs should not have been barred.

"The probate code does not require heirs to come forward with inheritance claims until after the trial court conducts an heirship proceeding," said the high court's ruling penned by associate justice John A. Maglona and concurred by chief justice Miguel S. Demapan and justice pro tem Herbert D. Soll.

The justices said that in a probate proceeding, the trial court is not barred from subsequently adjudicating decedent Maria Cepeda Rios's rightful heirs.

Maria Iglesias, as Rios' sole heir under the Chamorro custom of *poksai*, is entitled to Rios' property.

The justices remanded the case to the trial court for proceedings consistent with their opinion.

According to court records, Rios was born on Saipan in 1867. Rios married Francisco Rios and they had no children. She had three sisters: Regina,

Ana, and Emelia, and one brother, Luis Cruz Cepeda.

Ana married Juan Ada. Their son, Vicente Cepeda Ada, married Dolores Diaz, and they had a son, Vicente D. Ada, the appellee.

In 1890 Maria Iglesias was born. The trial court determined that Rios adopted Maria Iglesias through the Chamorro custom of "poksai" and that Rios raised Maria Iglesias as "pineksai."

Poksai is a Chamorro custom involving the raising or nurturing of a child by an adult or adults other than the child's biological parents. *Pineksai* is a person raised or being raised under poksai.

Maria Iglesias married Jose Iglesias and had 11 children. Rosa Sablan, a daughter of Maria Iglesias and Jose Iglesias, stated that Rios lived in the same house as Maria Iglesias "because she was the one that "poksai-ed"—that raised—her and that she was still a young girl when decedent Rios and Francisco Rios had asked for her to be her child.

Rios died on June 30, 1944. At the time of her death, she lived with Maria Iglesias.

A land document from 1941 indicates

decedent as the owner of Lot 1764, the Saipan land at issue.

In January 1945, Juan filed a statement of death or disappearance of owner or lessee, indicating that decedent was the owner of Lot 1764. In 1975, Maria Iglesias died. In 1982, Rosa Sablan, Consolacion I. De Leon Guerrero, Petra Iglesias Macaranas, and Eugenia Iglesias Nauta filed a petition with various government agencies seeking ownership of Lot 1764.

Maria's heirs attempted to register the lot with the Land Commission Office. Registering the land prompted Vicente D. Ada to file a lawsuit against Maria's heirs in the trial court, claiming he was the owner of the lot.

The lawsuit was never litigated to final resolution.

In 1989, Vicente Ada filed the probate case and in June 1990, the trial court entered a decree of final distribution in Ada's favor.

Maria's heirs filed a lawsuit against Ada to set aside the final distribution decree.

The parties eventually stipulated to an order that set aside the 1990 final distribution and reopened the probate case.

The parties hoped to determine the heirs of Rios's estate and how to distribute the estate's property.

Jesus Iglesias Sablan served as estate administrator.

SAIPAN

From Page 1

mer La Fiesta shopping mall.

Sponsored by Rep. Oscar M. Babauta, the bill is awaiting a vote on the House floor.

The proposed legislation is similar to three bills rejected by the previous Legislature. It would allow video lottery terminals, as well as Texas Hold'em poker, black jack and baccarat games, to be operated at the former La Fiesta shopping mall.

But the bill, as stated in the text, is different "in scope, depth and content" from the casino initiative rejected by the Saipan voters in November 2007.

"The activities proposed under this act are quite limited in nature, will be authorized only in a controlled and specific location and environment, will allow for the orderly transfer to La Fiesta of all video poker machine installations currently

In 2004, the trial court issued its findings which determined that Rios adopted Maria Iglesias through *poksai* and that Rios raised Iglesias as *pineksai*.

In May 2006, the trial court issued its final order, holding that *laches* barred the claims of Maria's heirs and distributed Rios's property to Ada.

Jesus I. Saban appealed. (**Ferdie de la Torre**)

scattered and operating throughout the villages, will provide much needed tourist destination activity, and most significantly, can provide immediate funding relief to our cash-strapped CNMI government," the bill states.

The first La Fiesta gaming bill was introduced in the Legislature shortly after the initiative was defeated last year. The House of Representatives passed the bill, but the Senate killed it.

The second bill was introduced as a Saipan local bill. But the House on Friday rejected it as a local matter due to legal issues. The Constitution states that only Commonwealth law may allow any form of gambling in the CNMI. This means gambling must be established either by a public law passed by both houses of the Legislature or by initiative.

The third bill, introduced within two months of the initiative's defeat, was proposed as a rider to an appropriation measure. The bill also failed.

REYES

From Page 1

his complaint to the media and the Bar Association were raised by any of the three attorneys who represented him so far in these proceedings," Nutting said.

Nutting said he would let the Bar Association deal with the complaint.

Sirok said he has not seen the complaint.

"I don't even know what he is complaining about to the Bar Association. So I can't comment on it," Sirok said.

Reyes said yesterday that he filed his complaint with the Bar Association on Feb. 24, 2008, but no action has been taken yet.

In his complaint to the association's Disciplinary Committee chairman, Timothy H. Bellas, Reyes alleged that Nutting and Sirok violated the American Bar Association's Model Rules of Professional Conduct in their representations involving his father's estate.

Reyes said that under Rule 1.7 of the American Bar Association's Model Rules of Professional Conduct, a lawyer "shall not represent a client if the representation involves a concurrent conflict of interest."

With respect to Nutting, the executor said that on Jan. 5, 2007, on behalf of his client Maria Candado, Nutting filed a notice of claim against the estate in the Superior Court.

Reyes said Candado was his late father's girlfriend.

He said Nutting's claim against the estate represents a direct claim against the inheritance of Candado's minor daughter.

Reyes said that in March 2007, Nutting filed a petition to have Brian P. Reyes, a former or existing client and a known Nutting's business associate, appointed guardian ad litem for the minor child.

Although Nutting later had Brian Reyes hire lawyer Reynaldo Yana to represent him for the minor, Nutting filed the papers to have Brian Reyes

appointed guardian ad litem.

Charles Reyes said that Nutting also filed a motion for partial distribution to have Brian Reyes collect rent for the minor's mother, who is Nutting's other client.

This was despite the fact that the child already had ample financial support from her late father's Social Security and NMI Retirement Fund pension benefits, Charles Reyes said.

He said that Brian Reyes, his father's estranged brother, had previously filed at least two claims against the estate: one claim for \$10,000 and another for funeral expense reimbursements.

On Oct. 11, 2007, on behalf of the minor and Candado, Nutting filed a claimant's objection to partial distribution, according to the executor.

In this court filing, Reyes pointed out, Nutting clearly represented himself as the attorney for the minor and Candado.

Incredibly, in this court document, Reyes said, Nutting objected to the executor's motion to distribute the mi-

nor's share of a bank certificate of deposit.

He said Nutting argued that his client (the minor) should not receive her share of the money through the executor's motion to distribute because his other client, Candado, the mother, has a direct claim upon the funds for herself.

According to the Rules, Charles Reyes said, Nutting should not be able to do anything related to the child.

"Yet he has repeatedly acted with impunity and indifference to the rules on behalf of the minor child in this estate proceeding," he added.

With respect to Sirok, Reyes said that while James Matsumoto served (pro bono) as the guardian ad litem for the child, Nutting had his client Candado hire Sirok to file a notice of appearance to represent the interests of the child, despite filing a claim against the minor's inheritance.

In this instance, Reyes said, Sirok now simultaneously represents Candado as well as the minor, "a clear

violation of the Model Rules and the Supreme Court's ruling."

With the approval of judge Juan T. Lizama, Reyes said, Sirok is both the court-sanctioned guardian ad litem and the attorney for the child.

Sirok also represented or still represents Candado, he alleged.

He said Matsumoto, the former guardian ad litem serving free of charge, was removed without cause and replaced with Sirok.

At the hearing, Reyes said, Sirok asked the court to transfer money previously entrusted to the former guardian, Matsumoto.

He said Sirok asked the court to direct Matsumoto to transfer the child's money either to Candado or himself, falsely arguing that the funds were needed for the upkeep of the child.

However, when Candado testified, she admitted that the child's money was needed to pay for her attorney's fees.

"Sirok is not serving the best interests of the minor child," Reyes said.

FY09

From Page 1

According to the governor, the 1-percent decline in the government's resources is "an indicator that the economic worst is behind us."

Cost-cutting measures remain necessary, the governor said in the budget proposal he submitted last Friday.

"The challenge to stay within the budget authority remains the same in FY08 and FY09. Continued due diligence in implementing strict fiscal controls and cost saving measures is a must," he said.

Fitial asked the Legislature to approve relief measures integral to his budget submission.

An 11-percent retirement contribution rate, unpaid holidays, 12 austerity Fridays, and the continued reprogramming of lapsed funds and fund balances from various non-General Fund accounts are

all factored in the governor's budget.

Further, the governor urged lawmakers to pass a proposed revenue bill that would double the fees for driver's license, vehicle registration, general business license, and several other fees. He said the fee hikes will raise the \$2-million difference between projected expenditures and the available funding from General Fund resources, outside sources, and the annual Compact Impact reimbursement from the federal government.

For its part, Fitial said, the central government will centralize spending decisions in a bid to make procurement more efficient and apply equivalent standard for cost-saving measures.

To essentially freeze hiring, no currently vacant positions will be funded, with the exception of certain directorships.

Resources

The Department of Finance estimates

gross budgetary resources to reach \$169.55 million in fiscal year 2009, which runs from Oct. 1, 2008 to Sept. 30, 2009.

However, some \$3.67 million of this amount is earmarked to tobacco control, solid waste management, and the deportation fund. In addition, \$7.47 million will go to payment of debts.

This leaves \$158.4 million available for appropriations.

Finance Secretary Eloy S. Inos, in a memorandum to the Office of Management and Budget, said the net estimate assumes continued operation of certain garment factories through the first quarter of FY2009. It also includes assumption for a slight growth in tourist arrivals.

Further, the estimate assumes continued suspension of earmarking laws. The suspended provisions include the mandatory payment of alien worker fees to Northern Marianas College and public schools, 10 percent of the

gaming jackpot tax to public schools, 10 percent of CNMI poker fees to the Workforce Investment Agency and 50 percent to the NMI Retirement Fund, 70 percent of hotel taxes and 25 percent of alcoholic beverage taxes to Marianas Visitors authority, and 30 percent of hotel taxes and 20 percent of alcoholic beverage taxes to the NMI Retirement Fund.

Inos also said the revenue projection includes \$2.57 million that the Office of the Public Auditor expects to receive from autonomous agencies for prior years' OPA fees, as well as some \$4.1 million that the Northern Marianas Housing Corp. will pay the Marianas Public Land Trust for loan interests payments.

The governor expressed hope that the FY2009 budget process will run smoothly.

"I urge that in the spirit of harmony by way of putting all bipartisan and special interests aside, we all immediately get to work on the FY09 budget

and ensure that we have one in place and effected by 1 Oct. 2008," said the governor.

The CNMI government failed to pass a budget for fiscal year 2008 through the fault of both the administration and the Legislature. The governor submitted his budget proposal on Sept. 10, 2007, leaving the Legislature less than a month to review and pass a timely budget.

Shortly before ending session in January 2008, the 15th House of Representatives passed a budget bill. But no action was taken in the 15th Senate.

The new House passed another appropriation bill last month. But disagreements with the Senate prevented the bill from becoming law.

Last week, both houses rushed to passage a package of "interim fiscal measures" that would allow the government to continue operating under the FY2007 budget level despite declining collections.

Status petition garners over 700 signatures

By **RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN**
rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Human Dignity Movement has collected over 700 signatures for a petition that seeks to obtain a more permanent immigration status for long-term

guest workers.

The petition, which aims to collect 5,000 signatures, will be forwarded to federal government agencies to urge them to establish federal permanent status and an "eventual pathway to citizenship for the legal

long-term guest workers, for parents of U.S. citizen children who live and work in the CNMI and for those new guest workers that the government will need to invite to the U.S. to perform the jobs that many U.S. citizens in the CNMI shun

or are not trained to perform."

According to Human Dignity Movement leader Jerry Custodio, the petition is expected to collect at least 5,000 in a matter of two weeks. After two weeks, scanned copies will be sent to human rights activist Wendy

Doromal who will then distribute them to various agencies in the U.S. mainland.

The petition is addressed to members of the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Natural Resources, House Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, and the Human Rights Watch.

The petition states that, while it is true that guest workers were not promised resident status or a pathway to citizenship when they were recruited, many have already lived in the CNMI between five and 30 years, or even more.

"Some of us have spent more

years of our lives in the CNMI than in our homelands," stated the petition.

"The argument that guest workers entered the CNMI knowing that their entry for work would not qualify them for a permanent status, thus they should not be granted one, is not a fair one."

"We are not claiming a right; we are making an appeal for fairness and justice," the petition states.

Custodio said any long-term guest workers who would like to add their signature to the petition are encouraged to call any of the officers of the Human Dignity Movement at 233-0052.

Custodio said that the Human Dignity Movement would also like to reiterate the group's strong support for Rep. Tina Sablan's proposed bill to grant a more permanent status for long term guest workers in the CNMI.

Corolla, Frontier, RAV4 lead their classes

By **MARK RABAGO**
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Toyota Corolla, Nissan Frontier, and Toyota RAV4 currently lead their respective classes in terms of sales, according to the March 2008 report of the Commonwealth Auto Dealers Association.

The report, which covered the first quarter of the year, showed that the Toyota Corolla is the best-selling sedan, with 18 units sold so far this year. This is 18 percent of the market.

The Toyota Camry is a close second with 16 cars sold for 16 percent of the market. The Toyota Yaris gives the Japanese automaker the Top 3 in the sedan category for the January-March period with 15 units for an equal 15 percent share of the market.

Mitsubishi Lancer (10 units), Honda Civic (nine), Mazda Mazda3 (nine), Nissan Altima (four), Honda Fit (four), Nissan Sentra (three), Ford Fusion (three), Nissan Versa (two), Hyundai Accent (two), Mazda RX8 (two), Kia Rio (one), Nis-

san Maxima (one), and Mazda Mazda6 (one) make up the rest of the sedans sold in the first quarter of 2008.

Nissan Frontier, for its part, grabbed the lion's share of the truck market with seven units sold so far in the year, which translates to a whopping 38.80 percent of the segment.

Ford Ranger and Toyota Tacoma finished tied at a far second with four units apiece sold in the January-March period for an identical market share of 22.22 percent.

Mazda pickups (two units and 11.1 percent market share) and Ford Sport Trac (one and 5.56 percent) make up the rest of the trucks sold in the first quarter of 2008.

In the sports utility segment, the Toyota RAV4 was tops with nine units sold in the first quarter of the year. That translates to an 18.75 percent share of the market for SUVs.

The Toyota Highlander was the second best-selling SUV with six units sold and 12.5 per-

cent of the market. Five Hyundai Santa Fe and Toyota FJ Cruiser units have so far been snapped up and the models are tied at third with 10.42 percent market share each.

Ford Escape and Kia Sportage (four units and 8.33 percent market share each), Mazda CX9, Nissan Pathfinder, and Hyundai Tucson (three and 6.25 percent each), Mitsubishi Outlander and Honda CR-V (two and 4.17 percent), and Nissan Rogue and Toyota 4 Runner (one and 2.08 percent each) make up the rest of the SUVs sold in the first quarter of 2008.

General Motors took the lead in the vans segment with nine of its makes sold in the first three months of the year. This represents 37.5 percent of the market.

The Toyota Sienna has sold four units so far and that is 16.67 percent of the market, while the Ford E-Van and the Kia Sedona cornered 8.33 percent of the market each after disposing of two units each. Mazda Mazda5 captured 4.17 percent of the market



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
CNMI Statewide Independent Living Council



PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to 1 CMC §9910, hereby giving notice that the State Independent Living Council will hold its FY 2008 2nd General membership meeting on April 9, 2008 at the Chamolinian Room, Hyatt Regency Saipan at 10:00AM. Interested individuals are welcome to attend.

AGENDA

- I. **Welcoming**
- II. **Preliminary Items**
 - A. Review and Adoption of Agenda
 - B. Review and Adoption of Minutes
- III. **Report**
 - A. Chairperson
 - B. Trip Reports
 - C. OVR Director
Fiscal Status
- IV. **Old Business**
 - A. Membership Issues
 - B. Vacancy Status
- V. **New Business**
 - A. 2008 Resource Allocation Plan
 - B. Logo, SILC's Awareness materials
& Activities/Website
 - C. 2008 Calendar for Meetings (including Rota and Tinian)
 - D. NCIL Conference
- VI. **Announcements**
- VII. **Adjournment**

Jerry McVicar

Jerry McVicar
SILC Chairperson

c/o Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
P.O. Box 506296 SAIPAN, MP 96950
TEL: (670)322-6538 FAX: (670)322-6536
TTY: (670) 322-6449 E-MAIL: Voc.Rehab@Saipan.Com

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands



Department of Public Health
Women, Infants and Children Program
Navy Hill Bldg N-25



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

On August 8, 2007 the Department of Public Health officially opened the Women, Infants and Children Program, better known as "WIC."

The WIC Program is 100% federally funded, and provides nutritious foods, nutrition education, and health care referrals for pregnant and new mothers, infants and children below the age of five (5).

The WIC Program's goals are to reduce nutrition related health problems, promote breastfeeding, prevent anemia, and help lower medical costs for low-income families in the CNMI.

WIC foods include iron-fortified infant formula and infant cereal, iron-fortified adult cereal, vitamin C-rich fruit or vegetable juice, eggs, milk, cheese, peanut butter, dried beans/peas, tuna fish and carrots. Special therapeutic infant formulas and medical foods may be provided when prescribed by a physician for a specified medical condition.

The Program would like to thank the community for its patience during the initial phase of operation, and would like to assure the residents of Rota and Tinian that plans are underway to bring services to these respective islands. More information will be provided when the proposed opening dates are confirmed.

Eligible participants must meet income guidelines, CNMI residency requirements, and be determined to be "nutritionally at risk" by a health professional.

For more information or to schedule an appointment, please call 236-8750/58 or visit the WIC Clinic in the CHC Dialysis Center, north entrance.

New uses eyed for empty garment buildings

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Abandoned garment warehouses may have alternative uses after all.

Deputy Commerce Secretary Michael Ada said that companies eyeing Saipan as a possible staging point for investments in the upcoming military buildup in Guam could use the infrastructure that once belonged to the island's once-thriving garment industry.

"There are a variety of opportunities that exist for the CNMI. The infrastructure for manufac-

turing is already in place due to the garment industry's presence on the island. However, with many of these facilities sitting idle, the capacity and space is ideal for pre-fabrication operations," he said in an e-mail to the *Saipan Tribune*.

Ada said that during the 2nd Guam Industry Forum he attended last month, a number of companies have already inquired about the possibility of setting up shop on the islands and taking advantage of the islands' investment-friendly laws.

"We were able to meet many

firms who inquired about the opportunities that existed in the CNMI. There were roughly 1,300 attendees, so you can imagine the amount of prospects there were. At this point, we are mostly exchanging information."

The Commerce official said the CNMI could accommodate a host of operations related to the Guam military buildup.

"According to the informa-

tion released at the forum, requirements include the pre-fabrication of items, such as doors, framing, etc. There are also opportunities for material warehousing, logistical operations, and training functions that exist for the CNMI," he said.

Ada further said that the CNMI offers a number of benefits to companies that want a piece of the action in the 2010-2014 military expansion in

Guam, expected to cost as much as \$15 billion.

"With the labor costs, tax incentives, available facilities, proximity to Guam, affordable lease terms, and efficient and reliable shipping services, the CNMI possesses many attractive qualities to the firms who want to join in on the military expansion in Guam. I think that the availability and cost of space is going to be a big

draw to many companies to the CNMI," he said.

Ada said, though, that the CNMI must get its act together, especially in providing reliable power for potential investors.

"We will have to be able to effectively address the CUC issue, as the sporadic availability of utilities may be a concern for these firms. I believe Dr. Laney (First Hawaiian Bank's economist) may have commented on this as well. The absence of reliable and affordable utilities may offset any potential cost savings they may realize through tax incentives, cheaper lease rates, and low labor costs. Hopefully this won't be the case, but it is definitely something we have to contend with if we want to draw these firms to the CNMI."

The Guam military buildup is targeted at 2010-2014 following the relocation of 8,000 U.S. Marines and about 9,000 of their dependents to the U.S. territory from Okinawa, Japan.

2008 Taste of the Marianas planning now in full swing

The Marianas Visitors Authority and the Hotel Association of the Marianas are already in the thick of planning this year's "Taste of the Marianas."

The kickoff will be on May 3 at American Memorial Park, followed by four consecutive Saturday evenings on May 10, 17, 24 and 31. The event takes place from 6pm to 10pm on the dates listed.

The Taste of the Marianas has been described as "an international food festival and beer garden with various competitions and entertainment provided by local and guest performers." The event is reflective of the islands with village huts built to create as island flavor.

This year's participating food vendors include Aqua Resort Club, Capricciosa & Tony Roma's, D'Elegance Restaurant, Fiesta Resort & Spa, Hafadai Beach Hotel, Herman's Modern Bakery, Hula Girl, Hyatt Regency Saipan, Mariana Resort & Spa, Pacific Islands Club Saipan, Palms Resort Saipan, Poon's Restaurant, Saipan World Resort, Thai House Restaurant and Ty & Tia.

"The Taste of the Marianas has become an annual event that both locals and visitors have come to enjoy," said MVA managing director Perry Tenorio. "At MVA, we embrace the opportunity to have our visitors to the island experience our local culture in an environment that has become a mainstay for the island of Saipan."

For more information, contact MVA at 670.664.3200 or www.mymarians.com. (MVA)



HOUSE SESSION

Committee on Commerce & Tourism chair Rep. Joseph C. Reyes and Committee on Judiciary & Governmental Operations chair Rep. Rosemond B. Santos listen during a discussion in Wednesday's special House session on Capital Hill.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

2 employees allegedly steal cases of Spam through hole in the wall

Two store employees allegedly stole 50 cases of Spam by making a hole on the wall that separates the store's warehouse and their living quarters.

Abe Sahagun Ladrangan, 24, and Jin Xuan Zhe, 26, were arrested Saturday for theft.

At yesterday's hearing, Superior Court associate judge Ramona V. Manglona imposed a \$5,000 cash bail each for the defendants' temporary liberty.

Detective Joaquin I. Deleon Guerrero said the victim identified the two employees as the

suspects after conducting an in-house investigation.

The victim called the police on March 8.

Deleon Guerrero said that Ladrangan confessed to him and his employer that he and Zhe stole 50 cases of Spam from I-Mart's warehouse in December 2007.

Deleon Guerrero said that Ladrangan admitted they sold the Spam to a businesswoman who owns Hong Kong Store in Garapan and he received \$340 as his share.

The detective said the owner of I-Mart and Fresh Market reported that the total value of the stolen goods was \$1,250.

Deleon Guerrero said that Ladrangan and Zhe stayed in the employee quarters located underneath the I-Mart.

He said Ladrangan claimed that they gained entry into the warehouse by cutting a hole about 30 centimeters in diameter in the wall that separates the warehouse and their barracks. (Ferdie de la Torre)

'Saipan continues to be a favorite for US Navy'

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce reported that Saipan continued to be a favorite MWR (Morale, Welfare, and Recreation) destination for U.S. Navy servicemen.

In the Chamber's April newsletter, Armed Force Committee co-chairs Doug Brennan and Judge David Wiseman said, "Saipan continued to receive recognition form [U.S.] Navy officials as a highly desirable MWR destination for military vessels.

According to the report, Brennan, Wiseman, along with Chamber president James T. Arenovski and its executive director Kyle Calabrese, also

met informally with Command Master Chief Vince Vinson of Submarine Squadron 15.

The squadron was on Saipan for a week of R&R and also raved about the island's potential as an MWR destination.

"The committee is working with MVA (Marianas Visitors Authority), PDI (Pacific Development, Inc.), the [Commonwealth] Ports Authority, and Office of Military and Veterans Affairs, and other relevant government agencies to further streamline and improve the pre-arrival and arrival briefing process," according to Brennan and Wiseman.



Northern Marianas College Procurement & Property Management

Office P.O. Box 501250 CK, Saipan, MP 96950 U.S.A.
Tel: (670) 234-5498 ext. 2300/01/02 Fax: (670) 235-7601
E-mail: procurement@nmcnet.edu Website: www.nmcnet.edu

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL RFP 08-011

Litigation and Legal Counseling Services

Northern Marianas College is soliciting competitive sealed proposals for litigation and legal counseling services for the institution. Specifications and Scope of Work packages may be picked up at the **NMC Procurement Office, Bldg. L, 2nd Floor, Monday to Friday between the hours of 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:00-4:00 p.m.** There may be a fee when picking up a package. Please call 234-5498 ext. 2300/01/02 for information regarding fees.

Proposal Packages are due no later than 4:00 p.m., April 21st, 2008, Saipan time at the Northern Marianas College, As Terlaje Campus, Procurement Office, Bldg. L, 2nd Floor, Saipan, MP 96950. Article 7, "Local Business Preference", as amended by Public Laws 15-95 and as further amended by Public Law 15-118, is available to local vendors in this procurement. **For Proposers located outside of the CNMI:** You may request a copy of the RFP via fax (670) 235-7601 or e-mail to Duane R.T. Sablan (duanes@nmcnet.edu).

All Proposers are hereby notified that the Northern Marianas College will affirmatively insure that in any contract entered into pursuant to this advertisement, women and small business enterprises will be afforded full opportunity to submit proposals and will not be discriminated against on grounds of race, color, national origin, political affiliation, creed, sex, religion, age, familial status, and disability status.

This solicitation does not constitute an offer and does not obligate the College in any way. The NMC reserves the right to reject any and/or all proposals for any reason and waive any defect in said proposals, or cancel in part or its entirety this RFP, if it deems, in its sole discretion, it is in the best interest of the College. All costs incurred by the proposer to prepare a response to this solicitation and subsequent inquiries shall be borne by the proposer. All submittals shall become the property of NMC and will not be returned.

Approved by the following:
/s/ Duane R.T. Sablan
Acting, NMC Procurement Officer

A Land Grant Institution accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges and by The Senior Commission for Colleges and Universities of the Western Association for Schools and Colleges



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E-mail: procurement@nmcnet.edu Website: www.nmcnet.edu

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL RFP 08-012

Construction of Concrete Fish Tanks

The Northern Marianas College Cooperative Research, Extension, and Education Service is soliciting competitive sealed proposals for the construction three (3) fish tanks at Paupau beach. Specifications and Scope of Work packages may be picked up at the **NMC Procurement Office, Bldg. L, 2nd Floor, Monday to Friday between the hours of 8:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:00-4:00 p.m.** There may be a fee when picking up a package. Please call 234-5498 ext. 2300/01/02 for information regarding fees.

Proposal Packages are due no later than 4:00 p.m., April 22nd, 2008, Saipan time at the Northern Marianas College, As Terlaje Campus, Procurement Office, Bldg. L, 2nd Floor, Saipan, MP 96950. Article 7, "Local Business Preference", as amended by Public Laws 15-95 and as further amended by Public Law 15-118, is available to local vendors in this procurement. **For Proposers located outside of the CNMI:** You may request a copy of the RFP via fax (670) 235-7601 or e-mail to Duane R.T. Sablan (duanes@nmcnet.edu).

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Approved by the following:
/s/ Duane R.T. Sablan
Acting, NMC Procurement Officer

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Rotating power outages return

A generator problem at the Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s Power Plant 1 has required Engine No. 6 to be shut down for the mechanical and electrical staff to perform necessary repairs.

As a result of these repairs, CUC said the power plant would not be capable to generate the required electrical power to adequately meet the island's demand. Therefore, load shedding is required.

While these repairs continue, rotating power outages will be implemented. Traffic lights, water and wastewater services will also be affected.

CUC stressed that the rotating outage schedule assumes that no further generator malfunctions occur during these emergency repairs.

"Should the Second Partial outages of the grids be insufficient to stabilize the generation

capacity, the First Partial and additional feeders not listed may also be affected," said the utility in a statement. (CUC)

OUTAGE SCHEDULE

8am – 10am Kiya 1: Lateral

Joeten Commercial Complex: CUC, Joeten Grocery, PHI Pharmacy, CNMI Revenue & Taxation, Department of Public Lands
Kannat Tabla and the Stanford Hotel area

10am – 12pm Feeder 1: Individual Streets

Upper China Town and Upper MIHA in Garapan
Feeder 3: Laterals
Taro Sue area down to Gualo Rai area

12pm – 2pm

Feeder 7: Entire Grid

Lower Base industrial area, north to Tanapag, Achugao, San Roque, As Matus and Marpi

2pm – 4pm Kiya 2:

Second Partial

San Antonio, Afetna, Koblerville, Chalan Piao and portions of Chalan Kanoa

4pm. – 6pm Kiya 4: Second Partial

Susupe Court House south to portions of Chalan Kanoa

6pm – 8pm Feeder 4: Second Partial

Capitol Hill to Kagman

8pm – 10pm Kiya 2: Second Partial

San Antonio, Afetna, Koblerville, Chalan Piao and portions of Chalan Kanoa

10pm – 12am Feeder 7: Entire Grid

Lower Base industrial area, north to Tanapag, Achugao, San Roque, As Matus and Marpi

Four volunteer groups cited for annual 'Steward Award'

By RIANNE PANGELINAN-BROWN
rianne_pangelinan@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Beautify CNMI has recognized four volunteer groups for its Environmental Steward Award during its recent two-year anniversary concert with ukulele virtuoso Jake Shimabukuro.

The four volunteer groups who were recognized as Beautify CNMI's Stewards were Friends of the Marianas Islands, Marianas Dive, Paseo de Marianas Promoters and Max Aguon and the Pantalon Boys.

Friends of the Mariana Islands, which won the Steward Award for the second straight year, participate in weekly Beautify CNMI activities. As members of the Restoration Committee, they have adopted Garapan, Laulau Bay, and Isa

Drive. They also helped with the restoration of the Navy Hill Lighthouse, a drainage clearing project between Fina Sisu and Chalan Kanoa, and have helped with numerous tree plantings.

Marianas Dive was recognized for its monthly underwater and beach cleanups and for its promotion of responsible diving. This year the group installed several dive moorings off of Tinian to reduce damage to corals caused by anchors. The group also lobbied for the passage of HR 15-100, now Public Law 15-124, which prohibits the taking of Spotted Eagle Rays.

PDM Promoters participates in the monthly cleanup of Garapan, but every morning you can see them in the Paseo cleaning and making the area look nice in

the evenings the members keep an eye on things. They have also sponsored the Recyclable Christmas Tree Ornament contests and the Recyclable Easter House contest, both of which promoted recycling among the islands' elementary students.

Max Aguon and the Pantalon Boys have adopted Sugar Dock. Every day they pick up trash and they manicure the area on a regular basis. They have also put up barriers to keep people from driving on the beach, which drips oil, creates ruts in the sand, and kills vegetation.

The four groups were given trophies at the recent Jake Shimabukuro concert in front of an audience of 500 people.

Dr. John Joyner of the Coastal Resources Management accepted the award on behalf of Max Aguon and the Pantalon Boys who were not able to attend the event.

Acclaimed author sets free Saipan lecture

The NMI Council for the Humanities is inviting the public to attend a free lecture by Native American author Georgia Perez, titled "Listen to Your Dreams and Follow Your Heart," tomorrow, April 9, 6:30pm, at the Visitors' Center Theater of the American Memorial Park.

Perez, of Nambe Pueblo, New Mexico, is the author of the acclaimed *Eagle Books*, a series of four beautifully-illustrated children's books commissioned by

the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia.

The *Eagle Books* are brought to life by wise animal characters, Mr. Eagle and Miss Rabbit, and a clever trickster, Coyote, who engage Rain that Dances and his young friends in the joy of physical activity, eating healthy foods, and learning from their elders about health and diabetes prevention.

The inspiration to write the books came to Perez in a series

of dreams that took some time for her to interpret. The eagle, which played a prominent role in these dreams, became one of the principal characters in her books.

Perez will discuss her experiences as an author and the role that dreams play in revealing important messages and resolving problems.

The lecture is the second in the Council's recently-established series featuring prominent authors and their works. (PR)

Gridley joins Judiciary as PIO, admin officer

Virginia Gridley, a former CNMI television news reporter, has joined the Judiciary as public information officer and administrative officer.

Gridley, who is also a former Ms. CNMI Universe, will be taking over the post of Trinidad Diaz, an administrative officer for the Supreme Court, who resigned her post in March 2008.

"We are pleased to announce Gin Gridley's hiring as Administrative Officer and Public In-

formation Officer for the Judiciary," stated the Judiciary news release.

In December 2007, The National Center for State Courts and State Justice Institute issued a report titled *Strategic Plan and Time Standards for the CNMI Judicial Branch*. One report recommendation was appointing a PIO to meet the needs of the public. Justices and judges are forbidden to comment during pending

cases and a public liaison is critical in supporting communication between the Judiciary and the community.

"The court is supporting current cost cutting measures and feels Ms. Gridley's hire as a replacement is a sound financial choice. She is taking on multiple roles at a salary lower than Mrs. Diaz, and filling critical needs of the Judiciary to serve the public and public interests," the statement said. (PR)



Saipan Tribune, the CNMI's first daily newspaper, is looking for fresh talent to join our team.

REPORTER

- At least two years' experience writing for a newspaper or magazine;
- Must know how to write hard news, features, and business stories;
- Must have competent grasp of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and syntax;
- College graduate (Journalism, Communication, Creative Writing, English majors a plus)
- Must be methodical, analytical, detail-oriented, and can work fast within strict deadlines;
- Must be a fast learner, self-starter, aggressive, and a team player;
- Must be willing to work on holidays, weekends;
- Computer literate and with driver's license.

SPORTS REPORTER

- At least two years' experience covering sports for a newspaper or magazine;
- Must have competent grasp of grammar, punctuation, spelling, and syntax;
- College graduate (Journalism, Communication, Creative Writing, English majors a plus)
- Must be methodical, detail-oriented, and can work fast within strict deadlines;
- Must be willing to put in flexible work hours;
- Must be a fast learner, self-starter, aggressive, and a team player;
- Computer literate and with driver's license;
- Must be willing to work on holidays, weekends;
- Must be passionate about sports.

ART DIRECTOR

- At least five years' experience in the publishing industry or related field;
- Must have at least two years' supervisory experience in the field;
- High proficiency in Adobe CS applications (InDesign, Illustrator, and Photoshop); knowledge of other applications for print and web a plus;
- Deep familiarity with Mac environment; knowledge in PC is a plus;
- College graduate (Fine Arts, Graphic Design or related course);
- Must have extensive knowledge in digital pre-press production and printing;
- Must be willing to work on holidays, weekends;
- Must be creative, resourceful, and can work fast.

GRAPHIC ARTIST

- At least three years' experience in the publishing business or related field;
- High proficiency in Adobe CS applications (InDesign, Illustrator, and Photoshop); knowledge of other applications for print and web a plus;
- Deep familiarity with Mac environment; knowledge in PC is a plus;
- College graduate (Fine Arts, Graphic Design or related course);
- Must have basic knowledge in digital pre-press production and printing;
- Must be willing to work on holidays, weekends;
- Must be creative, resourceful, and can work fast.

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT

- At least high school graduate;
- Typing speed of at least 40 words per minute
- Must have extensive experience using Microsoft Office applications (Word, Excel, PowerPoint);
- Must be familiar with Mac computers (knowledge in PC is a plus);
- Must be willing to work on holidays, weekends;
- Must be a fast learner, self-starter, and a team player.

If you think you have what it takes to be part of this dynamic team, submit your most recent résumé and portfolio to the *Saipan Tribune*, located on the second floor of the CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan. Or e-mail it to editor@saipantribune.com. On-island hires preferred.

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Traditional canoe to be built at arts fest

This year's Flame Tree Arts Festival on April 24-27, 2008, will feature the construction of a traditional Carolinian canoe—a sacred event opened to the public only in recent years—in keeping with this year's theme, "Fatta I Irenciata, Abwáári Ya-asch Schówammwir, Showcase our Inheritance."

Henry John Yarofalpiy, the son of master navigator Pius Mau Pailug of Yap State, will demonstrate the construction of a *meta'bwil*, or trolling canoe, using techniques passed from father to son through generations.

"As I am growing older myself, I have realized that keeping knowledge in oneself's clan and family or culture is the factor that allows for our culture to fade into adapting many Western ways," said Yarofalpiy. "It is now my desire to give the community, children and anyone interested a chance to learn, witness and gain knowledge in the building of a traditional canoe."

The Flame Tree Arts Festival venue will be the highlight of what is anticipated to be a six-month project which will include the weaving of ropes from coconut husks fibers, selecting and harvesting of a breadfruit tree for the hull and other parts of the canoe, and actual carving and assembly.

"During my childhood, my father paved the way for my brothers and me to learn the

survival importance and value of the canoe," said Yarofalpiy. "In the many years of being educated by our father, through chants and storytelling, I have grown to pay great tribute, respect and honor of the canoe as part of our daily survival."

The Flame Tree Arts Festival is Micronesia's largest annual arts and culture celebration. This year's festival will be held at Civic Center on

Saipan on April 24 and April 25 from 6-10 p.m., April 26 from 9 a.m.-10 p.m., and April 27 from 9 a.m.-11 p.m.

"We are honored to have Mr. Yarofalpiy share his traditional knowledge of canoe building at this year's festival, and we invite both residents and visitors to come and experience this part of traditional navigation for which Micronesia is world-renowned," said Commonwealth

Council for Arts and Cultural Executive Director Cecilia Taitano-Celes.

To read more of Yarofalpiy's story, register for a booth, or learn more about the 2008 Flame Tree Arts Festival, contact the Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture at 670-322-9982/3 or visit the official Flame Tree Arts Festival site at <http://flametreeartsfestival.googlepages.com>. (PR)



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Staff of the Commonwealth Council for Arts and Culture and Department of Public Works are all smiles on April 6, 2008, as they erect signs for the 27th Annual Flame Tree Arts Festival on Saipan. The festival will be held April 24-27, 2008, at Civic Center in Susupe and will feature live performances, visual arts, traditional crafts, and international cuisine.



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

March vs cancer in May

The Marianas March Against Cancer Committee is inviting all cancer survivors to attend the 2008 MMAC at the Hopwood Junior High School field on May 16-17, 2008. The event will run from 6pm to 6am. Cancer survivors are invited to attend the dinner event which will be held in their honor. Call Nora Sablan at 235-0998 or e-mail her at norasablan@gmail.com to RSVP and to update your contact information. (MMAC)

Team registration for MMAC

The Marianas March Against Cancer Committee is reminding the general public that the deadline for team registration for the upcoming 2008 MMAC is this Friday, April 11, 2008.

The MMAC Committee is encouraging anyone interested in forming a team in honor of a loved one who has experienced cancer or has lost the battle against this deadly disease to contact MMAC as soon as possible. If you or anyone you know has been touched in one way or another by cancer, we urge you to join the battle against one of the leading causes of death in the CNMI and the world. Attend the Team Captains' meeting at 5:30pm on April 9 at the Hyatt Regency's Chamolinian Room.

For more information email Chris A. Concepcion at chrisa Concepcion@gmail.com or Catherine Attao at attao20@yahoo.com. (PR)

Open House Night at Chacha Ocena View

The Chacha Ocean View Jr. High School is pleased to announce that the school will be having an Open House Night on Thursday, April 10, 2008, from 4pm to 6pm to distribute 3rd Quarter Student Report Cards. Should you have any questions and/or comments, call 237-3921 or 664-4100. (PR)

Koblerville Elementary School announcements

Kindergarten Registration for Koblerville Elementary School will begin on Tuesday April 8, 2008. Applicants will be placed on a first-come, first-served basis.

Registration forms for ongoing KoES students for SY 08-09 will be sent home along with a notification on any required documents that need to be updated. Parents are being asked to come into the school and turn in these documents as soon as possible.

The next PTSA meeting is scheduled for Tuesday April 8, at 6pm in the school cafeteria. There will be a performance for parents led by the school's

first grade students. All parents and guardians are encouraged to attend this very important meeting. (PR)

MHS Class of '78 meeting

There will be a meeting for the MHS Class of 1978 on Tuesday, April 8, 2008, 7pm, at Snack 'N Go (King's Plaza) in Dandan, across the Joeten Building in Dandan. Should you have any questions, contact Elizabeth Salas Balajadia at 898-9535. (PR)

Slots open for GOP nat'l convention

The CNMI Republican Party has announced the availability of the following positions for interested individuals from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to participate in the upcoming Republican National Convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota from Sept. 1 to 5, 2008.

Interested individuals must submit a letter of intent, resume, and complete an application.

The following programs are available:

- Page program: Applicant must be at least 16-25 years old;
- Intern program: Applicant must be currently enrolled at any postsecondary educational institution; and
- Delegate aide: Applicant

must be able to assist the delegation and be at all meetings called by the chairman.

All expenses to attend the RNC convention must be the responsibility of the applicant. Deadline to apply is April 10, 2008, by 5pm. Final selection will be made by the RNC Committee on Arrangements.

Submit the required documents through email to anategerego@gmail.com. (GOP)

Chamber scholarship materials now online

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce's Educational Scholarship Fund information and application materials are now available at www.saipanchamber.com, as well as at the Chamber office in the Family Building on Garapan Street in Garapan.

This year, the Chamber will award six \$1,500 scholarships to deserving Saipan high school seniors. To download complete eligibility requirements and application materials, visit the Chamber's website.

Applications are due at the Chamber office by 5pm, Friday, April 18, 2008 and scholarships will be awarded at the Chamber's general membership meeting on June 4, 2008. Questions may be directed to the Chamber at info@saipanchamber.com or 233-7150. (SCC)

Flashback

A LOOK BACK AT PAST YEARS' HEADLINES

April 08, 2002

Solution offered to financial worries

Public Safety Commissioner Edward C. Camacho is opening doors for DPS employees to pursue part-time job opportunities outside the department, in the wake of an ongoing initiative to reduce and eventually get rid of overtime in the government sector. Camacho disclosed the impending plan Friday during a press conference, a move that he said would first involve policy changes.

Prison project lifts off

Using 17 new, gold-colored spades that glittered hotly under the scorching, noonday sun, representatives of the Commonwealth government, the clergy, and Telesource CNMI Inc. executives finally broke ground Friday on the \$17.29-million Saipan Adult Prison project. After more than two years of delay brought on by protests and counter-protests that snagged the project's momentum, it took all of three seconds for the 17 officials to shovel the white sand and flip them through the air to complete the groundbreaking rites that officially signaled the start of the project.

Medicaid debt hurting CHC's daily operations

Unpaid billings to the Commonwealth Health Center, including the indebtedness of the CNMI Medicaid Program, have resulted in drastic budget cuts for the Department of Public Health. This has heavily impacted on the department's day-to-day operations, according to a senior health official. Acting Public Health Secretary Pete Untalan said the department had to contend with belt-tightening measures, such as freezing well-deserved salary increases of technical health personnel.

April 08, 2003

Hopes high on reimbursements

The House Committee on U.S. and Foreign Affairs expressed high hopes that the U.S. Department of the Interior's recent call for a "simple, fair and transparent" Compact-impact reimbursement process would spell better chances for the CNMI to collect on the "true costs of migration." This, as committee chairman Rep. William S. Torres reiterated the need to arrive at a calibrated formula that would compute Compact-impact costs in a manner that is coherent, credible, defensible and uniform to all impacted entities-Hawaii, American Samoa, Guam and the Northern Marianas.

Diego smoothens ruffled CUC feathers

The Babauta administration has no intention of deliberately keeping the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. in the dark about the proposed Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Plant. Rather, the proposal of the Maryland-based Sea Solar Power International to set up such a plant on Saipan is still a tentative matter and the Memorandum of Understanding that Gov. Juan N. Babauta signed with the company is intended to just allow the firm to come over and check the CNMI for such a project.

Energy plant proposal turns off legislator

Sen. Ramon S. Guerrero can think of several reasons to pass up on the \$50-million Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion plant that Maryland-based Sea Solar Power International is proposing to build in the CNMI. After meeting the company's president in Washington D.C. last week, however, Guerrero has one reason that sticks out: the CNMI should do business only with "courteous" people.

April 08, 2004

OPA cites Babauta for expenditure violation

The Office of the Public Auditor has cited Gov. Juan N. Babauta for violating several statutes, including exceeding his budget appropriation, during his term as CNMI Resident Representative to Washington D. C. in 1998 and 1999.

China Southern Air bats for more flights to Saipan

China Southern Air, which was earlier reported as fielding direct flights to Tinian later in the month, has applied for additional flights to Saipan instead. This was learned from Commonwealth Ports Authority executive director Carlos Salas, who said that the application has been submitted to the Federal Aviation Administration requesting flight schedules to Saipan from any point in China. He, however, is still waiting for confirmation.

Island Snapshots



BIRTHDAY GREETINGS
Birthday greetings going out to Jr. Del Rosario, who is celebrating his birthday today, April 8, 2008. "May you enjoy your wonderful birthday and may you have many more birthdays to come." Greetings come from your loving mom, dad, sister Lisa, and brother Willord.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Belated birthday greetings go out to Vicente Gumban, who had his birthday on April 6, 2008. "Belated happy birthday, ninong!" Geetings come from Royce Ben and family.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Happy birthday greetings to Allan Perez of Troy, lovingly known to his friends as "Boy Abunda" of Saipan, who is celebrating his birthday today, April 8, 2008. Greetings come from your friends and guests at Troy.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Belated birthday greetings go out to Rex Ben, who celebrated his birthday on April 4, 2008. "We love you tatay!" Greetings come from your wife and kids (Royce, Rane and Roxy Ben).

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



SAVING LIVES
Mike Pascual of GTS Security and other participants perform adult CPR during the "Super CPR Saturday" training hosted by the NMI Chapter of the American Red Cross at the Hibiscus Hall of Fiesta Resort and Spa Saturday morning. The event was designed to give participants the confidence to respond in an emergency situation with skills that can save a life.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ



KICK BUTTS DAY
2008 Miss Marianas Teen Ariel Cherie St. Clair dances with children at the Koblerville Youth Learning Center as they perform a traditional Japanese dance during the Department of Public Health Community Guidance Center's 4th Annual Kick Butts Day celebration Wednesday last week.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ



JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Children at the Koblerville Youth Learning Center entertain the crowd as they perform a traditional Japanese dance, as taught by members of the Tensuiren, Awa Odori Traditional Dance Group.

Members of the Marianas High School color guard hold the CNMI and U.S. flags during the Kick Butts Day parade.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ



Ricky Itibus, chairperson of the Kick Butts Day Committee, checks the collected cigarette butts from different schools.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ



RESIDENCY FORUM
Hundreds of foreign workers, local residents, and members of the business community listen to lawyer Deanne Siemer during a forum called "Long-Term Resident Status: Issues and Possibilities for Change Under CNMI Law," inside the Monte Carlo bar in Chalan Piao Wednesday night.

JACQUELINE HERNANDEZ

Opinion

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

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EDITORIAL

When the truth gets you jail time

Pity the poor Chinese propagandist. The more frantically he works to justify his government's behavior, the more unjustifiable the behavior becomes. This week, the sentencing of a peaceful human rights activist, Hu Jia, to 3 1/2 years in prison made the task that much more difficult.

On one level, you might argue that the charge on which Hu, 34, was convicted was absolutely merited. Hu's crime was to speak some truths about repression in Tibet, the squelching of human rights and so on. He was convicted of "inciting subversion of state power." That may be strictly accurate, given that the Chinese state and the Communist Party that controls it depend for their power on the maintenance of many untruths, such as the fictions that they guarantee autonomy to the Tibetan and Uighur regions, and that China's people enjoy freedom of speech and other rights supposedly guaranteed in China's constitution. The peaceful expression of truth may indeed be subversive to such a system. But that's not a terribly winning argument for the propagandist.

Hu was arrested after he testified to the European Parliament and published a letter urging a focus on human rights as the Summer Olympics approach.

In pushing back against the letter's suggestion of a relationship between the Olympics and the nature of China's political system, Chinese officials are receiving a great deal of assistance from Olympic officials. The latter love to declaim when convenient on the Games' greater significance to humankind; the Olympic Charter, after all, promotes "a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity." But now that China is going back on the promises that it made in order to win the Games for Beijing—to improve its human rights policies, to provide unfettered access to foreign media—squirming Olympic officials are insisting that the Games are about nothing but time trials and winning scores.

China sought to host the Olympics to showcase its new confidence as it emerges into the 21st century as a great power and an engaged global actor. But in its refusal to talk with the Dalai Lama and in its hounding of powerless young men such as Hu Jia, the Chinese regime looks anything but confident. The louder its propaganda machine seeks to trumpet manufactured evidence against Buddhist monks or to convince the world that Hu Jia is a dangerous criminal, the less confident it looks.

(c) 2008, The Washington Post



Behold the Material Girl

By ROBIN GIVHAN
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

For the 10th time in her career, Madonna appears on the cover of Vanity Fair magazine. She's stretched out on the May issue wearing a black leotard and over-the-knee boots, looking like a Vitruvian pinup.

The pop star is almost 50, which seems to be the leitmotif of the accompanying story—as if we are compelled to check in with Madonna to see how she is handling each turning point in her life. Over the years, the magazine has dutifully recorded in words and elaborately styled photos Madonna's early success, her failed first marriage, the publication of "Sex," her hankering for film stardom, motherhood, Malawi and, of course, her magnificent physical upkeep.

In an online video promoting the May issue, editor Graydon Carter notes that the story on Madonna is "not the normal fawning treatment." Indeed, it is sprinkled judiciously with sarcasm and bits of wry humor.

The result is a story whose prose is more entertaining than its subject. Shockingly, Madonna has gotten boring. Our Madonna—the rule-breaking, professional provocateur, endearing egoiste, subject of countless maligned college courses on post-modern female sexuality, patron saint of a generation of young women who relied on pop culture psychobabble to excuse their exhibitionist tendencies—has become a cliché. She's just another aerobized pop singer with a cause.

We saw this moment coming as her antics ceased being provocative and vaguely political and became slightly embarrassing in that 2004 Gwyneth Paltrow look-at-the-cupping-marks-on-my-back way. Madonna should not have French-kissed Britney Spears. She shouldn't have talked so much about yoga and her macrobiotic diet, and she certainly shouldn't have discussed either topic with that distracting British accent.

We have nothing left to ask Madonna. The only questions left are those that we hope no one has the audacity to pose. But of course, eventually someone will. And we'll be left with our hands pressed against our ears desperately trying to block out some piece of information dropped into the middle of an unassuming story the way Jennifer Lopez told People how her twins were conceived naturally with that hungry-looking Marc Anthony rather than artificially. *We. Don't. Want. To. Hear. That.*

But until we are sent screaming from the room, we are bored. In her past incarnations, Madonna has always chosen a character with which most people were unfamiliar. She didn't invent

her different personas. She appropriated them from New York's downtown art scene in the 1980s or from gay dance clubs, but she walked all those archetypes into the spotlight. She popularized them and she was surprising.

But now her enthusiasms and eccentricities seem bland. Her fascination with the mysticism of Kabbalah pales next to the sci-fi oddities of Hollywood's favorite religion, Scientology. She decided to adopt an orphan-who-was-not-an-orphan from Malawi. And while it would be cruel to be suspicious of her motives, it would be fair to say that the decision came after Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt were well on their way to setting up a miniature United Nations in their home. Where Madonna had once led the way—in poking, prodding and agitating—she was now following.

Her new CD, "Hard Candy," will be released April 29. She has collaborated with Timbaland, Pharrell Williams and Justin Timberlake, and we're more intrigued to hear how they will influence her rather than how she will interpret their sound.

She writes children's books, which is sweet, but placid compared with her earlier oeuvre, "Sex," a tacky, spiral-bound nude book that featured pictures of an unclothed Madonna alongside people such as Big Daddy Kane and Vanilla Ice. She starred in the delightfully tawdry documentary "Truth or Dare" in 1991, which was based on her Blond Ambition tour. But now she has directed a documentary on Malawi as well as "Filth and Wisdom," her first feature film, which she told Vanity Fair had been "seriously influenced" by Jean-Luc Godard. That might be true, but couldn't she hear how pretentious it sounded? Our Madonna was never pretentious—at least back when she still sounded like a Midwesterner.

Our Madonna was never a leader of an alternative, underground movement. She was just shocking enough to ruffle the sensibilities of middle America, mainstream religion and anonymous corporations.

Has she grown tired of being provocative? Or does provocation now require dangerously self-destructive behavior in the manner of Amy Winehouse? Madonna has become a curiosity: a pop singer pushing 50 with the perfectly preserved body of a 20-year-old and a hankering for Kabbalah water.

Madonna became a cultural icon because she was sly enough—and daring enough—to use her body as everything from a storyboard to a weapon. Ten years' worth of photographs in Vanity Fair document Madonna the boy toy, the powerful diva, the Lolita, the gender-bending dominatrix, the sexy mother. Each guise said something interesting about femininity. But her latest incarnation—blond waves, lace-up boots and a corset—speaks to the most old-fashioned, condescending sentiment of all: She looks good for her age.

EDITORIAL POLICY The *Saipan Tribune* welcomes comments on any article, column, editorial, or topic that may be of interest to the public. Letters to the editor must include the name, address, and contact number of the contributor. Letters that are critical in nature should focus on issues, not personalities. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, CIC Centre, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Letters to the Editor

A 10 percent cut in salary

I am one of the legislators who voted for the Interim Fiscal Measures for FY 2008 and implement austerity Fridays and unpaid holidays along with other cost saving measures. I am informing the Director of the Legislative Bureau to reduce my salary by 10 percent, as soon as the bill becomes law. This is the same amount being imposed on government employees whose salaries are not protected by the Constitution. The protected group includes legislators, judges, the governor and lieutenant governor. The bill, in Section 6, encourages those with protected salaries to voluntarily participate in the payroll austerity program despite the separation of powers and the constitutional protection. Until such time as the Constitution is amended to change or eliminate protected salaries, volunteering to participate in a salary reduction is the only option available for these positions.

Choosing to support austerity Fridays and holidays was painful, knowing that many people and their families will be adversely impacted. Some will be forced to make painful sacrifices just to feed their families, let alone provide the healthy diet essential for children to arrive at school alert and ready to learn. Some may severely cut

back on the use of power. This could start a vicious circle, spiraling through lower living standards, which affects environmental safety and nutrition, which affects health, which affects the betterment of our children through educational achievement, and ultimately affects a society's stability. I am fighting to keep us from stepping onto the slippery slope toward social instability.

The government must continue to function and supply basic services. Public safety, health, and education are essential parts of a modern society. Operating for six months of a fiscal year with no budget was harmful. A decision had to be made to stop the fiscal hemorrhaging. Payroll is such a large percentage of the government's costs that it had to be considered. In the end, employees will benefit more by participating in austerity holidays than in mass lay-offs.

There are less than six months left in FY2008. The governor's proposal for FY2009 is due. I will be looking carefully for the most efficient and cost-effective ways to provide basic services while cutting costs.

Some of the government's problems are obvious. This does not mean the solutions are simple. Making progress on reforming the government's pension plan was extremely complex, and building support in the Legislature took time. Nor was last year's reform the final solution, more needs to be done.

Many of the difficulties we face today are similar. The detailed work necessary to plan a solution is complex. Building consensus in the legislature to support that plan and monitoring a new law's performance takes time.

Along with my colleagues in the Legislature, I was elected to lead. I hope so. I try. My choice to volunteer a 10 percent pay cut is my way, however small, of sharing the sacrifices being made by those who will be required to observe the austerity programs mandated by HB 16-083.

Sen. Maria Frica T. Pangelinan
16th Northern Marianas Legislature
Capital Hill, Saipan

I dare you: Take the lead!

When the House of Representatives first passed House Bill 16-83 HD5, better known as the "interim fiscal measures," I immediately intended to write a letter to the editor. I just never imagined that after reading last Saturday's *Saipan Tribune* issue where the Senate voted in favor of the bill without amendments, I was so fuming mad that I was up at 4:30 Sunday morning typing this.

First and foremost, let me make it clear that I don't mind putting in my share in keeping the CNMI government afloat because I'd rather take this road than face the music the title of which is "R.I.F.", which means reduction-in-force and can be found in the Personnel Service System Rules & Regulations and is applicable to those of us who are under the civil service employment status. What really bothers me is the fact that those legislators who voted in favor of this bill did not offer any equitable solutions in terms of fairness to the employees. Remember what happened the first time around? Not all legislators followed those who voluntarily had their salary reduced, although I can understand that their salary is constitutionally protected. I am now waiting who among them will voluntarily do so. In the end, I really feel sorry for those in the low bracket earners, whether they are earning \$13,000, \$15,000, or \$16,000 per annum.

I for one would have felt content had the House members included Rep. Tina Sablan's amendments. Let me state also for the record my opinion that if the legislators were worried, for

whatever reason, then something should give. Which brings me to the subject of the four representatives who opposed passage of this bill. What were the legislators thinking in not entertaining Rep. Tina Sablan's amendments? Those congressmen who voted in favor should have just entertained Rep. Sablan's amendments and let the senators decide so we, the CNMI voters, will know where you really stand. I can understand the situation of Tinian and Rota elected officials and the exception I like to see is that they still be allowed to lease vehicles. However, if they are currently leasing SUV types, they should check for a cheaper lease like a sedan such as Corolla, Altima, or Mirage. I want to thank Reps. Tina Sablan, Heinz Hofschneider, David Apatang, and Ralph Torres for trying their best in offering amendments, in trying to bring common sense and fairness to the table, and lastly, in opposing the bill in its form. To those who voted for the passage of this House bill, I wish you good luck should you decide to continue your political journeys because I just don't know how much negative impact you have created with your very own words and action. Pray that your action and words will not haunt you in 2009 and beyond. I guess the only solution to this debate where you and I will definitely agree is if you have the guts to voluntarily take a cut in your salary.

As if it is still not enough for this 16th CNMI Legislature, with the passage of House Bill 16-83 comes another proposal submitted in

the Senate to reduce the salary of CNMI justices and judges. The assigned number is Senate Bill 16-26. If the Legislature had been howling left and right in cutting anyone's salary, why didn't they take the lead? Like I said, I can understand that these legislators have their salaries constitutionally protected, but why didn't they just volunteer first before passing House Bill 16-83, especially for those who voted in favor for its passage.

Finally, in hammering home my message, I would like to take these legislators back to January 2008 on the day of their inaugural Mass. Have you really forgotten the message of our Most Reverend Bishop Tomas Camacho? Have you really gone astray? To say that you are concerned because of controversy and delay OR that certain amendments have no room for a legislation is really childish that can be compared to an elementary level response. I would dare say that our Bishop would more embrace the knowledge if this Legislature has indeed proven its best for the benefit of the general public in thinking logic, justifiable reasoning, and fairness. That would have been better than a presentation of public relations tactics, with problems still hovering over our heads that could have been addressed thoughtfully, peacefully, and most important of all, in unity.

Estevan P. Cabrera
Carolinas Heights, Tinian

Social security and nonresident workers in CNMI

The Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Island is a tropical paradise offering magnificent beaches, crystal clear blue waters, the lively bustle of nightlife, shopping, a wide range of ethnic food and culture, and a multitude of outdoor activities.

Of all the former Trust Territories entitled to decide their future political identity, the people of the Marianas were the first to decide to enter into a Commonwealth arrangement in political union with the United States. On May 28, 1986, the United Nations Trusteeship Council concluded that the United States had satisfactorily discharged its obligations to the islands. On Nov. 4, 1986 U.S. citizenship was conferred upon those people of the Northern Marianas that met the necessary qualifications. The recent history of the NMI and its relationship with the United States is in fact entwined with the events surrounding World War II. The vital role of NMI during World War II made the islands a historic place. In other words, it was only after World War II that the CNMI came into existence. Since then, it has proven to be a prime location for investors and tourists. Establishment of many industries, such as garment factories and tourism industries, play vital roles in developing NMI economic condition. The NMI local population could not supply the high demand for workers required in those industries and business enterprises and, as a result, companies and factories started hiring alien workers from different part of the world.

All documented foreign workers in the CNMI are issued Social Security numbers. Nonresident workers have been paying their Social Security (FICA S.S.) and Medicare (FICA Medical) tax since the day they started working in NMI. The employer withholds FICA S.S and FICA Medical tax from every pay. As we were told, nonresident workers do not have to be a

U.S. citizen to earn Social Security and Medicare health insurance coverage if they have been lawfully admitted for work in the U.S. or U.S territories. During our working years, we paid Social Security and Medicare taxes on our earnings. Most people need at least 10 years of work at jobs where they pay Social Security taxes in order to qualify for retirement benefits. No retirement benefits can be paid until you have the required number of credit (40). Social Security is part of the retirement plan of almost every American and alien worker. Social Security benefits are paid to workers and their eligible family member when the worker retires.

Since May 12, 2007, our employer has stopped withholding our FICA S.S. and FICA Medicare taxes. We tried to find out from our employer the reason why social security and Medicare taxes and income taxes are not being withheld from our pay. We were informed by our employer that under our visa as a temporary nonresident alien, we are not subject to social security and Medicare withholding. The law was launched in 2004, however our employer continued to withhold the taxes from our pay until May 12, 2007. Thus most of employees could not complete 10 years to score the required 40 credits to be eligible for retirement benefits. Apparently, the money we paid as FICA S.S. and FICA Medicare tax is with the Internal Revenue Service. We are unable to get a refund from the employer. Alien workers are trying to find a way to get this money back and they have adopted their own ways to get their refund. Some nonresident worker have seek help from lawyers with high commission rate, which put them in the position of getting just a fraction of their refund at the end, if they are able to get the refund. A very limited number of workers have filed a claim for

refund with the Internal Revenue Service with required documents attached and Form 843 "Claim for Refund and Request for Abatement." And the remaining alien workers have either left the island, leaving the hope of getting refund, or do not know what to do to claim for refund. Most of them are perplexed. So far, no one has been successful in getting a refund either from the employer or from Internal Revenue Service.

These kinds of activities are happening in NMI without anybody's consent. Alien workers are not willing to quit as this money will bring much needed financial help and tremendous economic benefits to them as most of them are from underdeveloped countries. We were paying FICA S.S. and FICA Medicare taxes without any objection and hesitation, believing that all taxpayers with social security numbers who pay social security and Medicare tax qualify for retirement benefits. Now it is clear that foreign temporary workers in the NMI would not qualify for federal retirement benefit. How does the federal Internal Revenue Service distinguish the nonresident workers from resident workers or U.S. citizens since we are all paying the same taxes? In this regards, we would like to draw the concerned authorities' attention to grant nonresident workers justice. Nonresident workers want to either continue to pay FICA S.S. and FICA Medicare to complete the required 40 credits or get a refund of the amount we have paid to Internal Revenue Service as per federal law and regulation.






Looking forward to a favorable response from concern authorities.

Jwarhar Lal Rajbanshi
Tinian

Sattelite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam Homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

The Weather

5-Day Forecast for Saipan and Tinian

TODAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. East winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲83° ▼76°	▲83° ▼75°	▲82° ▼75°	▲83° ▼75°	▲82° ▼75°

Micronesia

Guam and Rota	Partly Sunny	▲84 ▼75
Palau	Partly Sunny	▲88 ▼77
Yap	Cloudy	▲86 ▼77
Chuuk	Partly Sunny	▲88 ▼78
Pohnpei	Mostly Cloudy	▲85 ▼75
Kosrae	Cloudy	▲88 ▼76
Majuro	Cloudy	▲84 ▼75

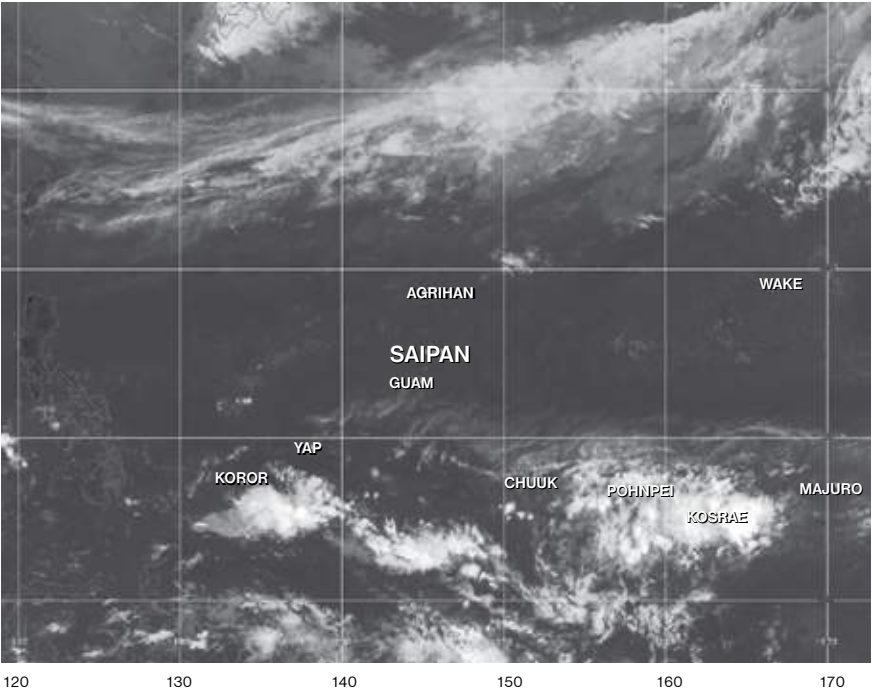
Around The Globe

Auckland	Cloudy	▲62 ▼51
Beijing	Rain	▲65 ▼51
Hong Kong	Cloudy	▲83 ▼76
Honolulu	Partly Sunny	▲81 ▼71
London	Showers	▲46 ▼37
Los Angeles	Cloudy	▲66 ▼50
Manila	Partly Sunny	▲89 ▼77
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	▲74 ▼59
Miami	Partly Sunny	▲85 ▼71
New York	Partly Sunny	▲56 ▼44
Osaka	Mostly Cloudy	▲63 ▼48
Paris	Showers	▲49 ▼41
Pusan	Mostly Sunny	▲64 ▼49
Rome	Thunderstorms	▲67 ▼50
Salem	Showers	▲49 ▼35
San Francisco	Mostly Cloudy	▲58 ▼48
Seoul	Sunny	▲72 ▼41
Tokyo	Rain	▲60 ▼54
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy	▲57 ▼46

Tides

Saipan Harbor		
3:04AM Today	Low Tide:	0.8 Feet
8:24AM Today	High Tide:	2.1 Feet
3:26PM Today	Low Tide:	0.4 Feet
10:11PM Today	High Tide:	2.0 Feet

Yesterday's Satellite Image



PICTURE TIME: 1:00PM, MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2008
Western North Pacific between Equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

A near-equatorial trough stretches from 1N130E to 3N140E to EQ149E. Scattered showers and isolated thunderstorms associated with the trough can be found south of Koror between 4N and 7N from 131E to 140E and southeast of Yap between 1N and 5N from 140E to 150E. Trade-wind convergence is producing scattered showers across Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae states between 2N and 8N from 154E to 167E. A second area of trade-wind convergence is generating scattered showers across the Marshall Islands between 2N and 7N from 167E to 180.

Sunrise/Sunset

Today	6:08AM	6:30PM
Wednesday	6:07AM	6:31PM
Thursday	6:06AM	6:31PM
Friday	6:06AM	6:31PM
Saturday	6:05AM	6:31PM

Moonrise/Moonset

Today	7:22AM	8:42PM
Wednesday	8:17AM	9:49PM
Thursday	9:17AM	10:55PM
Friday	10:20AM	11:58PM
Saturday	11:24AM	

GET YOUR PICTURES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS PUBLISHED—FOR FREE

The *Saipan Tribune* accepts for FREE publication the following:

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 - BIRTHDAY GREETINGS**
A way for families and friends to greet their loved ones, accompanied by a picture of the person celebrating his/her birthday.
 - BUSINESS**
Corporate donations, volunteer work, promotions, granting of awards, team-building exercises, meetings and other activities by members of the business community.
 - SAMUT SARI**
Pictures from the islands' Filipino community, primarily focusing on Filipino activities, gatherings, get-togethers, volunteer work, etc.
 - TRAVELOGUE**
Pictures of off-island travels. Contributors may submit up to 10 pictures for consideration.

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- Announcements of upcoming activities of organizations, community clubs, government agencies, and private companies.
- CAMPUS BULLETIN**
Announcements of upcoming activities in public and private schools, as well as calendar of activities. May include PTSA meetings, enrollment procedures.

REQUIREMENTS

- For pictures:**
- Photos should be original and not copyrighted. Contributors must have the right to allow the *Saipan Tribune* to publish the pictures.
 - Digital pictures should be high-resolution (minimum of 800kb).
 - Must have complete details (who, what, where, when), the name of contact person, and phone number.
 - Photos must have been taken in the last two months.
 - For birthday greetings, must be submitted no later than 12 noon of the previous day to make it to next day's edition.

- For announcements:**
- Must have complete details (who, what, where, when),

- the name of contact person, and a phone number.
- Must be submitted no later than 12 noon to make it to next day's edition.

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- To check if contributions are received, call (670) 235-6397, 235-2440, 235-8747

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF APRIL 8, 2008

DEPARTURES	ARRIVALS
Saipan-Rota CO 9313 8:30am 9:05am 3,4,7	Rota-Saipan CO 9598 11:10am 11:45am 1,2,6
Saipan-Guam CO9317 4:00am 4:50am Daily CO9597 8:30am 9:20am 1,2,5,6 CO9313 8:30am 10:00am 3,4,7 via Rota CO9601 12:30pm 1:20pm Daily CO9603 3:30pm 4:20pm Daily CO9605 6:30pm 7:20pm Daily CO9599 9:30pm 10:20pm Daily	Guam-Saipan CO 9316 2:30am 3:20am Daily CO9596 7:00am 7:50am Daily CO9598 10:15am 11:45am 1,2,6 via Rota CO9600 10:45am 11:35am 3,4,5,7 CO9602 2:00pm 2:50pm Daily CO9604 5:00pm 5:50pm Daily CO9606 8:00pm 8:50pm Daily
Saipan-Narita NW 078 8:40am 2:00pm Daily via Nagoya NW 075 4:45pm 7:25pm Daily	Narita-Saipan NW 076 10:15am 2:50pm Daily NW 077 6:25pm 1:25am+1 Daily via Nagoya
Saipan-Osaka NW 083 4:20pm 7:10pm Daily	Osaka-Saipan NW 084 10:30am 3:05pm Daily
Saipan-Nagoya NW 078 8:40am 11:25am Daily	Nagoya-Saipan NW 077 9:00pm 1:25am+1 Daily
Saipan-Manila CO 895 4:45pm 6:35pm 6 CO 895 6:45pm 8:35pm 3	Manila-Saipan CO 890 9:15am 2:55pm 6 CO 890 11:45am 5:35pm 3
Saipan-Seoul OZ 604 2:20am 6:00am 1 OZ 604 2:50am 6:30am 2,3,4,5,6,7 OZ 606 3:30pm 7:00pm 2,4,6,7	Seoul-Saipan OZ 605 9:00am 2:30pm 2,4,6,7 OZ 603 7:40pm 1:10am+1 7 OZ 603 8:10pm 1:40am+1 1,2,3,4,5,6
Saipan-Busan OZ 608 3:50am 7:20am 1,4,5,7	Busan-Saipan OZ 607 9:30pm 2:50am+1 3,4,6,7
Guam-Manila CO 891 6:00am 10:30am 3 via Yap and Koror CO 893 6:30am 8:05am 6 CO 893 8:25am 10:00am 2,7 CO 893 5:50pm 9:10pm 5 via Koror CO 933 7:00pm 8:40pm Daily PR 111 6:00am 7:45am 1,2,4,6,7	Manila-Guam CO 894 11:20am 4:55pm 2,7 CO 894 7:45pm 1:20am+1 6 CO 892 9:45pm 6:30am+1 3 via Koror and Yap CO 892 10:10pm 5:30am+1 5 via Koror CO 934 10:55pm 4:30am+1 Daily PR 110 10:15pm 4:00am+1 1,3,5,6,7
Saipan-Guanzhou CZ 3008 5:00am 8:00am 2,6	Guanzhou-Saipan CZ 3007 8:00pm 4:00am+1 1,5
Guam-Hongkong CO 909 6:40pm 9:25pm 1,5	Hongkong-Guam CO 910 10:35pm 5:15am+1 1,5
Guam-Rota CO 9598 10:15am 10:45am 1,2,6	Rota-Guam CO 9313 9:30am 10:00am 3,4,7

Editor's Note: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); CO: Continental; PR: Philippine Airlines; CZ: China Southern; CA: Air China; NW: Northwest; JO: Japan Airlines; OZ: Asiana; MU: China Eastern
ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)

FREEDOM AIR FLIGHT SCHEDULE

Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency	Airline	ETD	ETA	Frequency
Guam-Rota				FRE 113	11:40am	11:50am	Daily
FRE 100 7:00am 7:30am Daily				FRE 115	1:00pm	1:10pm	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 117	2:30pm	2:40pm	Daily
FRE 100 7:50am 8:20am Daily				FRE 119	4:00pm	4:10pm	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 121	4:40pm	4:50pm	Daily
FRE 200 9:00am 9:30am Daily				FRE 123 *	5:40pm	5:50pm	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 125 *	6:00pm	6:10pm	Daily
FRE 200 9:50am 10:15am Daily				Tinian-Saipan w/ connecting flights to Rota or Guam**			
Guam-Rota				FRE 102	7:05am	7:15am	Daily
FRE 300 4:00pm 4:30pm Daily				FRE 104	7:50am	8:00am	Daily
Rota-Saipan				FRE 106**	8:20am	8:30am	Daily
FRE 300 4:50pm 5:25pm Daily				FRE 108**	9:00am	9:10am	Daily
Saipan-Rota				FRE 110	10:00am	10:10am	Daily
FRE 400 6:00pm 6:30pm Daily				FRE 112	11:05am	11:15am	Daily
Rota-Guam				FRE 114	12:00pm	12:10pm	Daily
FRE 400 6:45pm 7:15pm Daily				FRE 116	1:30pm	1:40pm	Daily
Saipan-Tinian				FRE 118	2:50pm	3:00pm	Daily
FRE 101 6:45am 6:55am Daily				FRE 120**	4:20pm	4:30pm	Daily
FRE 103 7:30am 7:40am Daily				FRE 122**	5:00pm	5:10pm	Daily
FRE 105 8:00am 8:10am Daily				FRE 124	6:05pm	6:15pm	Daily
FRE 107 8:40am 8:50am Daily				FRE 126	6:20pm	6:30pm	Daily
FRE 109* 9:10am 9:20am Daily							
FRE 111* 10:45am 10:55am Daily							



NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:

- Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
- *11 on any PTI cellular phone
- Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.com

Business

Complaints about airlines on the rise

WASHINGTON (AP)—Late flights and lost bags, to say nothing of higher fares, are making air travelers grumpy, an annual survey of airline quality says.

The industry posted declines last year in every area of the Airline Quality Rating, amid rising fuel prices, safety problems and bankruptcy filings that shut down three carriers last week alone.

The biggest change was in the rate of consumer complaints, up 60 percent overall. The rate more than doubled at US Airways and Comair, and rose for 15 of the 16 airlines included in the study. The exception was Mesa Airlines.

On-time arrivals dropped for the fifth straight year, with more than one-quarter of all flights late, according to the survey. The rates of passengers bumped from overbooked flights and bags lost, stolen or damaged also jumped in 2007.

"The trend is bad and it doesn't look like it gets any better," said Dean Headley, an associate professor at Wichita State University and co-author of the study being released Monday.

The survey results mesh with the spate of problems that have beset

U.S. carriers, starting with surging fuel costs, Headley said.

ATA, Aloha Airlines and Skybus stopped flying just last week because of financial pressures. Major airlines have slashed jobs and passenger amenities while adding fees for second bags, traveling with pets and booking tickets by phone.

It is not surprising that people responded to higher prices and more frequent delays by complaining more, Headley said.

Six airlines - Frontier, Northwest, SkyWest, Southwest, United and US Airways - showed declines in every area in the survey, although Southwest still had the best on-time arrival

mark at 80.1 percent.

The Dallas-based carrier also had the lowest rate of consumer complaints, 0.26 per 100,000 passengers.

Still, the airline has not been immune from problems. It is fighting a record \$10.2 million fine from the Federal Aviation Administration for continuing to fly dozens of Boeing 737s that hadn't been inspected for cracks in their fuselages.

American, Delta and United airlines recently canceled flights to perform unscheduled inspections of certain aircraft, and US Airways found problems on some Boeing 757s after a wing part on one of its planes fell off during a flight.



A jet plane prepares to land at San Francisco International Airport on Thursday, April 3, 2008, in this photo taken from San Francisco Bay. AP

The Airline Quality Rating study, compiled annually since 1991, is based on Transportation Department statistics for airlines that carry at least 1 percent of the passengers who flew domestically last year. The research is sponsored by the Aviation Institute at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and by Wichita State University.

The other airlines in the survey were: AirTran, Alaska, American Eagle, Atlantic Southeast, Continental, Jet Blue and Mesa.

Among the study's conclusions:

■ The rate of consumer complaints about Mesa dropped by one-third and the airline also showed improvement in its rates of bumping passengers and

mishandling bags.

■ More than one-third of Atlantic Southeast Airlines flights were late, the worst on-time performance in 2007. The airlines also bumped passengers more often, at a rate of 4.5 per 10,000 passengers.

■ JetBlue and AirTran were far ahead of their competitors in avoiding bumping passengers from flights, at 0.02 and 0.15 per 10,000 passengers, respectively.

■ AirTran had the best baggage handling rate, at 4.06 mishandled bags per 1,000 passengers.

■ American Eagle ranked last in baggage handling with 13.55 mishandled bags per 1,000 passengers.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Survey: Gas prices up 5 cents in 2 weeks

CAMARILLO, Calif. (AP)—A survey says the national average price for gasoline rose 5 cents over the last two weeks. The average price of self-serve regular gasoline on Friday was \$3.32 a gallon, mid-grade was \$3.44 and premium was \$3.55. That's according to the Lundberg Survey of 7,000 stations nationwide released Sunday. Of the cities surveyed, the cheapest price was in Newark, N.J., where a gallon of regular cost \$3.03, on average. The highest was in San Francisco at \$3.72.

Microsoft gives Yahoo deadline on offer

SEATTLE (AP)—Microsoft set the clock ticking for Yahoo to accept its \$41 billion buyout offer in a letter to the Internet pioneer's board Saturday, warning that if a deal wasn't reached by April 26 the software maker would launch a hostile takeover at a less attractive price. "If we have not concluded an agreement

within the next three weeks, we will be compelled to take our case directly to your shareholders, including the initiation of a proxy contest to elect an alternative slate of directors for the Yahoo board," wrote Microsoft Chief Executive Steve Ballmer. "If we are forced to take an offer directly to your shareholders, that action will have an undesirable impact on the value of your company from our perspective which will be reflected in the terms of our proposal," he wrote.

Ikea fined for Sunday opening in France

PARIS (AP)—Ikea was ordered to pay more than \$700,000 last week for staying open on Sundays in a Paris suburb. A big French home repair chain was sued for nearly as much - also for violating a 102-year-old requirement to shut up shop on Sunday. Both cases show that the stakes are mounting in a long-running battle between French unions and retailers over shopping on the seventh day. The government of President Nico-

las Sarkozy, encouraged by major companies, is trying to shed old restrictions as part of broader plans to loosen up the French economy. Advocates of the 1906 law are digging in and demanding ever-higher fines against violators of a rule they say upholds a less spending-obsessed French way of life.

American freezes nonflight hiring

DALLAS (AP)—American Airlines has imposed a freeze on hiring management and support staffers as the nation's largest air carrier copes with high fuel costs and the slowing economy. The airline will honor job offers issued before April but is postponing additional hiring indefinitely, American spokesman Andy Backover said. American's hiring freeze is the latest sign of trouble in the airline industry. Skybus, ATA and Aloha Airlines have stopped flying in the past week and are filing for bankruptcy protection. American, Southwest and Delta airlines have all had to cancel flights recently to address safety concerns about some of their aircraft.

Iran to OPEC: Stop oil sales in dollars

TEHRAN, Iran (AP)—Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad is urging OPEC members to form a joint bank and stop pricing oil trades in U.S. dollars.

According to the Iranian government's Web site, Ahmadinejad told OPEC Secretary General Abdalla Salem

el-Badri the cartel "should establish a joint bank as well as having joint currency."

Oil is priced in U.S. dollars on the world market, and the currency's depreciation has concerned producers because it has contributed to rising crude prices and eroded the value of

their dollar reserves.

Iran has repeatedly urged OPEC members to shift sales away from dollar. But Iran's proposal to trade oil in a basket of currencies is not supported by enough OPEC members, which include staunch U.S. allies such as leading producer Saudi Arabia.

Investors await 1Q earnings, home sales

NEW YORK (AP)—The fear of the unknown that has rattled the stock market for months appears to be fading. The question now is whether upcoming corporate financial reports and readings on the housing market will further calm Wall Street's anxieties or rekindle them.

Stocks rose early last week and, despite data showing that U.S. employers are eliminating more jobs than they have in five years, held onto their gains. There was a palpable relief that some banks such as Merrill Lynch & Co. feel they have enough cash, while others in need of capital - namely Lehman Brothers Holdings Inc. and Switzerland's UBS AG - are able to sell stock to raise cash.

Now that JPMorgan Chase & Co. has offered to buy Bear Stearns Cos. and the Federal Reserve has lent hundreds of billions of dollars to banks, investors are more confident that the financial system can bounce back from what looked last month like a worst-case scenario: a big bank on the brink of collapse.

Wall Street knows other problems could arise, but at this point the overriding sentiment is that troubles down the road won't pull the whole market and economy down with them.

"There's been so much talk of recession for so long now. If anything, I get the sense that people are looking to get back in," said Brian Gendreau, investment strat-

egist for ING Investment Management. But they're apprehensive, he added. "There's bad economic news still coming in. It takes some pretty steely nerves."

The Dow Jones industrial average finished last week up 3.22 percent, the Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 4.86 percent, and the Nasdaq composite index ended up 4.20 percent.

The stock market's recovery was aided by selling exhaustion among big investors. Although it's impossible to predict the market's direction, it's likely that stocks are going to be driven less by investors' need to cash out, and more by the fundamentals underlying each stock. Those fundamentals will be determined mostly by profit reports.

Nation

ACROSS THE NATION

Detroit girl, 3, shoots self in head

DETROIT (AP) -- A 3-year-old girl found a gun in a bedroom of her home and shot herself in the head Sunday, police said. One of the girl's parents apparently owned the gun, and at least one parent was home when she shot herself Sunday afternoon. Police questioned the parents and took the gun, the Detroit Free Press reported. The girl was taken to Sinai Grace Hospital, then transferred to Children's Hospital of Michigan. The Detroit News reported she was in critical condition.

Escaped killer from Pa. caught in Calif.

GIRARD, Pa. (AP) -- A killer who escaped from a Pennsylvania prison in a trash can was captured in California after boasting of an appearance on Fox's "America's Most Wanted," state police said Sunday. Malcolm Kysor, 54, was arrested Saturday in a Bakersfield, Calif., park after someone notified police about the claim, police said. "Basically, it's a citizen's tip. He was in a park and he started bragging," Trooper Donald Claypoole of the Girard barracks said. Kysor was carried out in a truck hauling garbage from the medium-security State Correctional Institution at Albion, near Girard in northwestern Pennsylvania. He had been serving a life sentence since 1988 for an early 1980s slaying in Erie County.

Earthquakes hit remote Aleutian Islands

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (AP) -- Several earthquakes have jolted various sections of Alaska's remote Aleutian Islands. The Alaska Earthquake Information Center says three light quakes struck early Sunday. Officials say the quakes ranged in magnitudes between 4.2 and 4.7. The center says a moderate earthquake, with a preliminary magnitude of 5.1 occurred late Saturday night in the Rat Islands region of the Aleutians. There are no immediate reports that any of the quakes were felt or caused any damage.

La. river levees under heightened watch

BATON ROUGE, La. (AP) -- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has increased its surveillance of Louisiana's Mississippi River levees as the swollen river continues to rise. The river is not expected to overrun or breach the levees, even though water levels are higher than they've been in a decade, Col. Alvin Lee, commander of the corps' New Orleans district office, said Sunday. Lee said engineers in Louisiana are monitoring the levees with seven-day work weeks and 12-hour shifts - new manpower levels triggered by a forecast that the river will crest in New Orleans at 17 feet on April 16. That forecast is 1 1/2 feet higher than previous predictions, the result of heavy rains throughout the river valley. The levees were designed to contain at least 20 feet of water.

Pope will find diverse church in US

NEW YORK (AP) -- In his visit this month to the United States, Pope Benedict XVI will find an American flock wrestling with what it means to be Roman Catholic.

The younger generation considers religion important, but doesn't equate faith with going to church. Many lay people want a greater say in how their parishes operate, yet today's seminarians hope to restore the traditional role and authority of priests.

Catholic colleges and universities are trying to balance their religious identity with free expression, catching grief from liberals and conservatives in the process.

Immigrants are filling the pews, while whites are leaving them. Nearly one-third of U.S. adult Catholics are now Hispanic, and they worry about being considered a separate, ethnic church.

Despite these divisions, Catholics across the spectrum of belief have been energized by the pope's trip. The man who was once responsible for enforcing adherence to Catho-

lic doctrine isn't likely to do much scolding. Instead, he's expected to recognize the relative vibrance of the American church, while emphasizing core Catholic values: the reality of absolute truth, the relationship between faith and reason, love for the faith.

"I think he's going to come in and try to inspire. As pope, he's really taken the positive track on a lot of issues. I don't think there's any reason he wouldn't continue to do so now," said Dennis Doyle, a theologian at the University of Dayton, a Marianist school in Ohio.

Benedict has traveled to seven other countries since he was elected in 2005, but a papal journey to the U.S. is like no other because of the church's size and influence.

In a nation founded by Protestants, Catholics comprise nearly one-quarter of the population. Catholic America is the biggest donor to the Vatican. The U.S. also is home to more than 250 Catholic colleges and universities.



Benedict XVI

Investigators review VA credit charges

WASHINGTON (AP) -- Veterans Affairs employees last year racked up hundreds of thousands of dollars in government credit-card bills at casino and luxury hotels, movie theaters and high-end retailers such as Sharper Image and Franklin Covey - and government auditors are investigating, citing past spending abuses.

All told, VA staff charged \$2.6 billion to their government credit cards.

The Associated Press, through a Freedom of Information request, obtained the VA list of 3.1 million purchases made in the 2007 budget year. The list offers a detailed look into the everyday spending at the government's

second largest department.

By and large, it reveals few outward signs of questionable spending, with hundreds of purchases at prosthetic, orthopedic and other medical supply stores.

But there are multiple charges that have caught the eye of government investigators.

At least 13 purchases totaling \$8,471 were charged at Sharper Image, a specialty store featuring high-tech electronics and gizmos such as robotic barking dogs. In addition, 19 charges worth \$1,999.56 were made at Franklin Covey, which sells leather totes and planners geared toward corporate executives.

Government reports in 2004

said these two companies, by virtue of the types of products they market, would "more likely be selling unauthorized or personal use items" to federal employees.

Many of the 14,000 VA employees with credit cards, who work at headquarters in Washington and at medical centers around the nation, also spent tens of thousands of dollars at Wyndham hotels in places such as San Diego, Orlando, Fla., and on the riverfront in Little Rock, Ark. One-time charges ranged up to \$8,000.

On at least six occasions, employees based at VA headquarters made credit card charges at Las Vegas casino hotels totaling

\$26,198.

VA spokesman Matt Smith the department was reviewing these and other purchases as part of its routine oversight of employee spending. He noted that many of the purchases at Sharper Image and other stores included clocks for low-vision veterans, humidifiers, air purifiers, alarm devices and basic planner products.

Smith said all the casino hotel expenditures in 2007 were for conferences and related expenses. He said the spending was justified because Las Vegas is a place where "VA is building a new medical center and an increasing number of veterans are calling home."

Penn out as senior strategist for Clinton

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP)—Mark Penn, the pollster and senior strategist for Hillary Rodham Clinton's presidential bid, left the campaign Sunday after it was disclosed he met with representatives of the Colombian government to help promote a free trade agreement Clinton opposes.



"After the events of the last few days, Mark Penn has asked to give up his role as chief strategist of the Clinton Campaign," campaign manager Maggie Williams said in a statement released Sunday. "Mark, and Penn, Schoen and Berland Associates, Inc. will continue to provide polling and advice to the campaign."

Communications director Howard Wolfson and pollster

Geoff Garin will direct the campaign's message and strategic efforts for the campaign going forward, Williams said.

Penn's departure comes as Clinton, considered the front-runner for the Democratic nomination last year, trails Barack Obama in delegates and the popular vote with a must-win primary in Pennsylvania April 22 and nine other contests remaining. Clinton almost certainly will end the primary season narrowly behind Obama in the popular vote and pledged delegates unless the nullified primaries in Florida and Michigan are counted - a scenario that seems remote. Her challenge will be to convince some 800 superdelegates to



Clinton

back her despite the numbers.

Penn has been a lightning rod for controversy throughout the campaign and managed to retain considerable influence in the operation almost solely because of the candidate's loyalty to him. He was known to get into angry shouting matches with other members of Clinton's team, including longtime adviser Harold Ickes and media strategist Mandy Grunwald, who often disagreed with his strategic advice and resented his unchecked authority to design the candidate's message.

Democratic strategist Chris Kofinis, who had been a spokesman in John Edwards' campaign, said Penn's departure was

needed to help the candidate.

"The worst kept secret in the whole Democratic race was that Penn's campaign strategy was not working and that the Clinton campaign has unfortunately paid the price," Kofinis said. "The truth is this the best move the Clinton campaign could have made and something that I imagine most Clinton supporters wished had happened months ago."

The Wall Street Journal reported Friday that Penn, who serves as chief executive of public relations giant Burson-Marsteller, met with Colombian officials March 31 to help craft strategy to move the Colombian Free Trade agreement through Congress. Penn later issued a statement apologizing for the meeting, calling it an "error in judgment."

Search continues at polygamist compound

ELDORADO, Texas (AP)—Authorities who removed 219 women and children from a polygamist compound were struggling Sunday to determine whether they had the 16-year-old girl whose report of an underage marriage led them to raid the sprawling rural property.

Many people at the compound, built by followers of jailed polygamist leader Warren Jeffs, are related to one another and share similar names; investigators said in some case they were giving different names at different times.

Investigators on Sunday bused them out of Eldorado, nearly 200 miles northwest of San Antonio, as other law enforcement agents continued to search for more children and evidence at the 1,700-acre compound, the former site of an exotic game ranch.

State troopers armed with a search warrant raided the compound on Friday to look for evidence of a marriage between the girl, who allegedly had a baby at 15, and a 50-year-old man. Under Texas law, girls younger



Law enforcement officials assist members of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints onto a school bus in Eldorado, Texas, Sunday, April 6, 2008.

than 16 cannot marry, even with parental approval.

The women and children were taken out of the compound Friday and Saturday and had been staying in a local church and civic center.

By midday Sunday, dozens of women and children, mostly

girls, were seen boarding buses on their way to San Angelo, a larger town 45 miles away. The women wore long pastel dresses and many carried bedding; several had infants.

Officers entered the temple on the grounds late Saturday, but by Sunday they still had not located

the 16-year-old whose initial report of abuse led to the raid.

"There were some tense moments last night, but everything has remained calm and peaceful and they are continuing their search," Allison Palmer, a prosecutor from a nearby county handling the case, said early Sunday.

Asia

Suicide blast in Sri Lanka kills 14

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka (AP) -- A suicide bomber killed 14 people at an opening ceremony for a marathon Sunday, including a government minister who was nearing the starting line with a flag and a former Olympian. More than 90 others were wounded in the attack.

Officials blamed the bombing on the Tamil Tigers, rebels who have fought since 1983 for an independent homeland for the ethnic minority Tamils, marginalized for decades by successive governments run by majority ethnic Sinhalese.

The rebel group routinely denies attacks on civilians, and their spokesman could not be reached for comment.

Scores of runners and onlookers had gathered at the starting

line of the marathon in Weliveriya, about 12 miles from the capital, Colombo, as part of the national celebration of the upcoming Sinhalese New Year.

Jeyaraj Fernandopulle, the minister of highways and the ruling party's chief whip, approached the starting line with a flag he planned to wave to start the race when the bomb exploded, witnesses said.

"There was a sound of huge explosion and I saw a fireball," said Nishan Priyantha, a local journalist who was a few yards away from the blast, but escaped unhurt.

Television footage showed chaotic images of screaming people running through the bloodied streets.

"I saw severed heads, hands

and legs," witness Nalin Warnasooriya told The Associated Press. "Blood and body parts were everywhere. It was a horrible scene."

Fernandopulle, an acid-tongued politician who acted as the government's chief political enforcer and was considered a top rebel target, died on the spot, said government spokesman Lakshman Hulugalle.

"I saw the minister's body. It had been torn into pieces below the waist and there were other bodies without heads and legs," Priyantha said by telephone.

Fernandopulle was also a member of a government delegation involved in failed peace talks with Tamil rebels two years ago. The government said a funeral with state honors would be

held for him Thursday.

Thirteen others were killed - including former Olympic marathoner K.A. Karunaratne and national athletics coach Lakshman de Alwis - and more than 90 were wounded, Hulugalle said.

Karunaratne competed in the 1992 Olympic marathon and the 1993 World Championships. He won gold in the marathon and 10,000 meters at the 1991 South Asian Games.

President Mahinda Rajapaksa condemned the attack as an act

of savagery and vowed to push ahead with the war on the rebels.

"This dastardly act will not weaken our resolve to eradicate terrorism from our midst, and bring peace, harmony and democracy to all our people," he said in a statement.

Afghan leader hints at re-election bid

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Afghan President Hamid Karzai hinted Sunday that he plans to run for a second term, saying he has goals left to accomplish.

The comments were his first public indication that he will stand for re-election in 2009 despite discontent over his government, which is widely seen as weak.

Karzai, who was elected in 2004 to a five-year term in Afghanistan's first post-Taliban vote, told a news conference that "every human" wants to complete the work he has started.

"I pray to God that the people of Afghanistan are happy with me ... and will allow me to complete the work that I started - if they vote for me," Karzai said on the grounds of the presidential palace.

But Karzai added, "If you ask my heart, God is a witness that I am not happy to run again."

In diplomatic circles, Karzai is sometimes referred to as the "Mayor of Kabul," a reference to his control of the capital but weak authority in remote areas of the country.

Earlier this year, Michael

McConnell, the U.S. National Intelligence Director, said Afghanistan's central government controls just 30 percent of the country. The Taliban controls about 10 percent and local tribes control the rest, he said.

Afghanistan's Defense Ministry denied the assertion.

But last year was Afghanistan's bloodiest since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion, and analysts have warned that the Taliban's resurgence is threatening to turn the international effort here into a failure.

Japan's oldest person dies at 113

TOKYO (AP)—Kaku Yamanaka, Japan's oldest person, has died of old age in central Japan, officials said Saturday. She was 113.

Yamanaka died at a hospital where she was taken early Saturday after falling ill at a nursing home in Yatomi City in Aichi prefecture (state), an official at her nursing home said on condition of anonymity, citing policy.

Born on Dec. 11, 1894, Yamanaka became Japan's oldest

person when Tsuneyo Toyonaga, 113, died in February. It was not immediately clear who had become Japan's new oldest person, and Health Ministry officials were not available for comment Saturday.

Yamanaka was known for her love of singing and took part in local karaoke contests, the nursing home official said.

Japan has one of the world's longest average life spans - a factor often attrib-

uted to a healthy diet rich in fish and rice. In 2006 Japanese women set a new record for life expectancy at 85.81 years, while men live an average of about 79 years.

The number of Japanese living beyond 100 has almost quadrupled over the past 10 years. There were 32,295 centenarians in 2007, according to the Health Ministry.

Edna Parker of Shelbyville, Indiana, is recognized as the world's oldest person at age 114, according to Guinness World Records. She was born on April 20, 1893.



Yamanaka

ASIAN BRIEFS

Erap sees no problem with US trip

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—Ousted Philippine President Joseph Estrada said Sunday he plans to travel to the United States next month and does not expect any legal problem in connection with a U.S. spy plot case to which he has been linked. Estrada, 70, said he would apply for a U.S. visa for his planned two-week California trip in late May to seek treatment for his aching knees and a general medical checkup. Estrada was among a number of Filipino politicians identified last year in U.S. court documents as having received confidential U.S. government information illegally obtained by former Filipino police officer Michael Ray Aquino and former FBI analyst Leandro Aragoncillo.

Taiwan VP-elect to meet Chinese leader

TAIPEI, Taiwan (AP)—Taiwan's vice president-elect may hold informal discussions with China's leader at a trade forum on the mainland, what would be the highest-level meeting ever held between the two historic rivals, an official said Sunday. Vincent Siew will not discuss any sensitive political issues if he meets Chinese President Hu Jintao at the three-day Boao Forum, which opens Saturday in Hainan province, his spokesman Wang Yu-chi said. "Mr. Siew will meet some officials there, but a meeting with Hu has yet to be confirmed," Wang said. But Taiwan's United Daily News quoted unidentified Chinese officials as saying authorities

had agreed to the meeting so Hu could use the occasion to discuss matters of common interest with Taiwan's incoming government.

Taliban leader arrested in Afghanistan

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP)—Police say they have arrested a senior Taliban commander in southern Afghanistan. An Interior Ministry statement says authorities nabbed Abdul Jabar, described as the deputy of another arrested militant leader, Mansoor Dadullah. The statement says Jabar was detained Saturday in Kandahar, the Taliban's former power base and Afghanistan's most important southern city. Mansoor Dadullah, the brother of slain Taliban military commander Mullah Dadullah, was detained in February by authorities in Pakistan.

China, New Zealand sign free trade deal

BEIJING (AP)—China and New Zealand have signed a groundbreaking free trade agreement - the rising economic giant's first such pact with a developed country. The trade deal was signed Monday by Commerce Minister Chen Deming and his New Zealand counterpart Phil Goff at the Great Hall of the People. It will give New Zealand access to one of the world's fastest-growing economies. It was signed in front of Premier Wen Jiabao and Prime Minister Helen Clark. Clark is one of the first Western leaders to visit Beijing since rioting began last month in Tibet.

Nepal prepares for end of monarchy

KATMANDU, Nepal (AP)—It was a surprising sight in a land grown accustomed to surprises: the king at the wheel of a Mercedes-Benz, driving himself and his queen through the crowded streets of Katmandu.

"He was in the front seat! In traffic!" said Krishna Chetri, a 56-year-old shop owner.

"Where's the majesty?" he asked. "This is something I never would have believed."

In this Himalayan land, the Shah dynasty of kings reputed to be reincarnated Hindu gods is being pushed to possible extinction by the fallout from a decade-long communist rebellion and King Gyanendra's own autocratic ways.

Nepal votes Thursday for an assembly that will rewrite its constitution, the latest effort to transform a troubled, near-medieval land into a modern democracy.

And the assembly's first order of business: eliminating the monarchy.

"This king has done too much harm. He's shown us that we don't need kings," said Krishna Prashad Sitaula, a cabinet minister and a leader of the centrist Nepali Congress party who helped negotiate the peace deal with the rebels, known as the Maoists.

Not everyone is so sure.

"This king lost the people's favor," said Ram Shrestha Prasad, a 42-year-old priest at the Pashupatinath Temple, the clamorous shrine to which Gyanendra drove last month.

But "this talk of a secular republic is ignorant," he said. "Our kings created Nepal. They protect our Hindu religion. The



A woman in an ethnic dress waits by a statue of a temple guard adorned with flags of the Nepali Congress, at an election rally for the party in Bhaktapur, Nepal, Sunday April 6, 2008.

kings are the symbol of Nepal."

Yet in many demonstrative ways, Gyanendra's 269-year-old Shah dynasty has reached the end of the line.

In January, Nepal's interim parliament formally declared the country a secular republic. Gyanendra's portrait has disappeared from shop walls and the currency. "Royal" has been

removed from the name of the army and national airline. References to the king are gone from the national anthem.

Gyanendra has also endured other indignities. His \$3.1 million annual allowance and 10 of the family's palaces were taken away, as were the queen's beauticians and about half his ceremonial guard.

World

3 US troops killed, 31 wounded in Iraq

BAGHDAD (AP)—Suspected Shiite militants lobbed rockets and mortar shells into the U.S.-protected Green Zone and a military base elsewhere in Baghdad on Sunday, kill-

ing three American troops and wounding 31, officials said.

The attacks occurred as U.S. and Iraqi forces battled Shiite militants in Sadr City in some of the fiercest fighting since

radical cleric Muqtada al-Sadr ordered a cease-fire a week ago. At least 16 Iraqi civilians were killed and nearly 100 wounded in the fighting, according to hospital officials.

A military official said two U.S. troops died and 17 were wounded in the attack on the Green Zone, which houses the U.S. Embassy and the Iraqi government headquarters in central Baghdad.

Another American service member was killed and 14 were wounded in the attack on a base in the southeastern Baghdad area of Rustamiyah, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he wasn't authorized to release the information.

The U.S. military said separately that an American soldier was killed Sunday in a roadside bombing in the volatile Diyala province north of Baghdad. A U.S. soldier assigned to the division operating south of the capital also died Sunday from non-combat related injuries, according to a statement.

The deaths raised to at least

4,018 members of the U.S. military who have died since the Iraq war started in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count.

A senior U.S. military official, also declining to be identified for the same reason, said the rockets were fired at the Green Zone from Sadr City, while the mortar shells came from another predominantly Shiite neighborhood in eastern Baghdad, New Baghdad.

U.S. commanders have blamed what they call Iranian-backed rogue militia groups for launching missiles against American forces.

The strikes occurred despite a strong push by the U.S. military to prevent militants from using suspected launching sites on the southern edge of Sadr City, the Baghdad stronghold of the Mahdi Army of anti-U.S. cleric

Muqtada al-Sadr.

Fierce fighting erupted in Sadr City earlier Sunday after Iraqi troops backed by U.S. soldiers and attack helicopters tried to advance deeper into the enclave of some 2.5 million people.

American helicopters also fired Hellfire missiles that destroyed a vehicle and killed nine militants who were attacking Iraqi security forces with rocket-propelled grenades in the area, the military said in a statement.

The surge in violence came as tensions rose in Shiite areas despite al-Sadr's cease-fire order issued March 30 that eased nearly a week of clashes in Baghdad, Basra and other cities in the Shiite south. The cleric stopped short of asking his fighters to surrender their weapons, and sporadic clashes have continued.



A police officer tackles a demonstrator during the Olympic torch relay in London, Sunday April 6, 2008.

Raucous protests greet Olympic flame

LONDON (AP)—Demonstrators grabbed at the Olympic torch, blocked its path and tried to snuff out its flame Sunday in raucous protests of China's human rights record that forced a string of last-second changes to a chaotic relay through London.

The biggest protests since last month's torch-lighting in Greece tarnished China's hope for a harmonious prelude to a Summer Games celebrating its rise as a global power. Instead, the flame's 85,000-mile journey from Greece to Beijing has become a stage for activists decrying China's recent crackdown on Tibetans and support for Sudan despite civilian deaths in Darfur.

Demonstrators attempted to board the bus trailing the torch shortly after British five-time gold medal rower Steve Redgrave started the relay at Wembley Stadium.

Less than an hour later, a protester slipped through a tight

police cordon and gripped the torch before he was thrown to the ground and arrested.

"Before I knew what was happening this guy had lurched toward me and was grabbing the torch out of my hand and I was determinedly clinging on," former children's television host Konnie Huq told British Broadcasting Corp. television.

"I do feel for the cause," she said. "I think that China have got a despicable human rights record."

Another demonstrator tried to snuff the flame with a spray of white powder from a fire extinguisher, police said. Still others threw themselves in the torch's path. They were tackled or dragged off by police. Authorities said 37 people were arrested.

International Olympic Committee head Jacques Rogge issued his strongest comments yet on the growing political storm surrounding the Games

on Monday, saying he was "very concerned" about unrest in Tibet while underlining worries that violent protests could tarnish the Olympic movement.

"Violence for whatever reason is not compatible with the values of the torch relay or the Olympic Games," Rogge said. Rogge also downplayed talk of a boycott of the Games, saying there was no momentum for such a move.

Chinese state TV showed Olympic athletes carrying the torch, and people waving the Chinese flag. They aired limited scenes of protests, although the noon news did show one torch bearer stopped while police tensed around her. It also showed one demonstrator wrestled to the ground. Some of the protests and scuffles could also be seen on CNN and BBC broadcasts in China, but parts of those were blacked out by Chinese censors.

Blasts hit foreigners' complex in Yemen

SAN'A, Yemen (AP)—A housing complex used by foreigners in Yemen's capital came under attack late Sunday, with explosions shattering windows and prompting residents to evacuate with suitcases and boxes.

Nobody was injured in the attack on the upscale Haddah neighborhood. The U.S. Embassy said "three explosive rounds" hit the compound, with two blowing up inside and the third outside.

"The Embassy advises all U.S. citizens to exercise caution in this area of the city," the statement said.

After the blasts, Westerners were seen evacuating the compound. Some rolled suitcases and carried boxes to vehicles with diplomatic plates. Women huddled in idling cars, while children lugged backpacks.

Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab world, is Osama bin Laden's ancestral homeland and has a persistent al-Qaida movement that has attacked and killed foreigners on several occasions.

Last month, mortar shells were fired at the U.S. Embassy but exploded instead at a nearby girls' school, killing a security guard and wounding more than a dozen students.

A Yemeni security official, describing himself as the head of security in Haddah area, said that blast was caused by multiple "projectiles."

"Broken windows ... were all that resulted from the projectiles' attack," the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to speak to the media. Nobody was hurt, he said.

Two other security officials, who also spoke on condition of anonymity for the same reason, corroborated his account.

A witness said a blast shook the neighborhood.

"I heard a big blast that shook the southern suburb, but there was no fire or smoke coming out of the area," said Mohammed Omar, 30, who lives in the same area.

Sunday's attack came amid a backdrop of violence in Yemen's south, where security forces have been trying to put down riots by thousands of former southern Yemen army officers, political activists and unemployed men who accuse the government of unequal treatment. Two people were killed and eight others were wounded Sunday in continued clashes there.

WORLD BRIEFS

Egyptian workers riot over rising prices

MAHALLA EL-KOBRA, Egypt (AP)—Thousands of demonstrators angry about rising prices and stagnant salaries torched buildings, looted shops and hurled bricks at police who responded with tear gas Sunday in a northern industrial town as Egyptians staged a nationwide strike. About 150 people were arrested and 80 were wounded in the gritty Nile Delta town of Mahalla el-Kobra, where riots broke out among residents and disgruntled workers at the largest textile factory in Egypt. Protesters stormed city hall, burned tires in the streets, smashed chairs through shop windows and ran off with computers. At least two schools were set ablaze and facades of banks were vandalized, police said.

Zimbabweans prepare for Mugabe to stay

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP)—For a few brief moments, Zimbabweans suffering under the authoritarian rule of Robert Mugabe allowed themselves a rare burst of optimism after their longtime president suffered what appeared to be a devastating electoral loss. But ruling party stal-

warts and security chiefs—worried about their own fates in a post-Mugabe era—quickly dug in their heels, and Mugabe now appears poised to do everything he can to extend his 28-year rule. Earlier, news of the opposition victory sent supporters into the streets, dancing, singing and waving the open hand that is the Movement for Democratic Change's symbol.

Iraq: Sadr party faces rising isolation

BAGHDAD (AP)—Iraq's major Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish parties have closed ranks to force anti-American cleric Muqtada al-Sadr to disband his Mahdi Army militia or leave politics, lawmakers and officials involved in the effort said Sunday. Such a bold move risks a violent backlash by al-Sadr's Shiite militia. But if it succeeds it could cause a major realignment of Iraq's political landscape. The first step will be adding language to a draft election bill banning parties that operate militias from fielding candidates in provincial balloting this fall, the officials and lawmakers said. The government intends to send the draft to parliament within days and hopes to win approval within weeks.

Overdrive

2009 TOYOTA MATRIX XRS:

An economobile



THE WASHINGTON POST
The road performance of the 2009 Toyota Matrix XRS, a compact economy wagon that is best thought of as a hatchback, is good, but nothing close to sporty.

By WARREN BROWN
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WASHINGTON—There is a disconnection between the people who make and market cars and those who buy them. In support of that argument, we offer Exhibit A, the 2009 Toyota Matrix XRS wagon.

By implication, we also present Exhibit B, the practically identical 2009 Pontiac Vibe GT, which we have yet to drive but look forward to driving, mostly because it looks better.

The Matrix and Vibe are made by the same union workers in the same plant in Fremont, Calif. The facility is New United Motors Manufacturing, a joint venture between General Motors and Toyota.

That means the Matrix and Vibe generally have the same quality inasmuch as they were developed by the same designers and engineers using the same front-wheel-drive, small-car (Toyota Corolla) platform. But, according to various vehicle rating services, the Matrix is likely to have a higher resale value than the Vibe because the

Matrix wears a Toyota badge.

We could write volumes about that apparent unfairness, but that is another story. Here, we want to show you how automobile companies, domestic and foreign, often seem clueless about who really buys their products.

Essentially, the Matrix and Vibe are economobiles. But they were conceived in the late 1990s and introduced in the 2000 model year, when “economy” meant appealing to young buyers who wanted more than they could afford, which wasn’t much.

Automobile manufacturers came up with a variety of schemes to exploit that underfunded yet aspirant market. The basic ruse was to dress and dub as “sporty” cars that, by any reasonable estimate, were anything but. That is the case with little runners such as the Matrix XRS, just as it was for the Suzuki SX4 driven and reviewed for this column. We suspect the same will hold true for the Pontiac Vibe GT when we get it in our clutches, but we’ll reserve judgment until then.

Slapping “XRS” and “GT”

and “SX4” on basic economy metal, doing a little suspension tightening here and there and adding a few bits of go-go design attracts some young “enthusiast” buyers. But it does little for what has proved to be the biggest constituency for such cars—practical shoppers looking for quality and fuel economy at an affordable price more than for hot-rod fantasies.

In fairness, the more humble samples of the Matrix and, again, by implication, the Vibe, amply meet the needs and expectations of that primary econocar constituency, whose members include as many buyers in their 40s and 50s—and older—as in their teens and 20s.

For that primary audience, putting a zoot suit on a small economy commuter is a bit of a laugh. At least, that was the case with my crew: vehicle evaluations associate Ria Manglapus and my wife, Mary Anne.

We loved the high utility of the Matrix XRS, largely represented by its perfectly flat load floor. Its 2.4-liter, in-line four-cylinder, 158-horsepower

engine was great for city driving and cruising highways in the middle and right lanes. But the zoot-suit bits, particularly its more firm suspension system (four-wheel-independent with MacPherson struts and stabilizer bars front and rear, torsion beam and wishbone set-up rear), made little sense to the rest of the car.

The seats were soft and manually operated. In a Matrix that has been made three inches taller for 2009, you get a little car “that makes you feel as if you’ve sunk to the floor in a larger one,” Ria said. Riding on the hard suspension of the Matrix XRS while sitting on those soft seats “seems like sitting on a couch in a go-kart,” said Mary Anne.

I concurred with their assessments after a long highway cruise in the Matrix XRS. Except they might’ve added that the little car is a little noisy at highway speeds, all things I could’ve lived with if the car had been marketed for what it is—an economy car, a commuter, nothing less and, most certainly, nothing more.

NUTS & BOLTS

By WARREN BROWN
(C) 2008, THE WASHINGTON POST

COMPLAINTS

The seats are too soft and the suspension is too hard in the Matrix XRS. The car’s road performance is good, but nothing close to sporty.

HEAD-TURNING QUOTIENT

Zilch.

RIDE, ACCELERATION AND HANDLING

Good economy car performance in all categories, which means the XRS sport package bespeaks pretension.

BODY STYLE/LAYOUT

The Matrix is a front-engine, front-wheel-drive, compact economy wagon that is best thought of as a hatchback. It also is available with four-wheel drive.

ENGINE/TRANSMISSION

Standard for the Matrix XRS is a 2.4-liter, 16-valve, in-line, four-cylinder engine that develops 158 horsepower at 6,000 revolutions per minute and 162 foot-pounds of torque at 4,000 rpm. The engine is mated to a five-speed manual transmission.

CAPACITIES

There are seats for five, with rear seats providing ample room for adults. Cargo capacity is 19.8 cubic feet with rear seats up and 62 cubic feet with rear seats folded to reveal a flat load floor. Fuel capacity is 13.2 gallons of regular unleaded gasoline.

MILEAGE

We averaged 20 miles per gallon in the city and 28 mpg on the highway, very close to the government’s mpg rating for the Matrix XRS.

SAFETY

Standard equipment includes side and head air bags, electronic stability and traction control, and antilock brakes.

PRICE

The base price on the 2009 Toyota Matrix XRS is \$20,660. Dealer’s invoice price on that model is \$18,696. Price as tested is \$24,250, including \$3,200 in options (onboard navigation, premium JBL sound system, power transparent roof—called a “moonroof” in warmer regions and a “sunroof” in colder areas). Dealer’s price as tested is \$21,953. Prices sourced from Toyota and Edmunds.com. Also check Kbb.com and Cars.com, an affiliate of The Washington Post.

PURSE-STRINGS NOTE

The economy car segment is crowded and highly competitive. Here, you are well advised to shop and price against the identical Pontiac Vibe. Unless you are a member of the vehicle tuner tribe, drag-strip racers who can turn an \$18,000 car into a \$40,000 one, avoid overloading on options.

New snow tires protect drivers, roadways

AUGUSTA, Maine (AP)—Studded tires work best on snowy and icy roads across the nation’s snowbelt, but highway officials wince at the damage they cause when roads are dry. Promoters of a new type of winter tire believe they’ve solved the problem with some James Bond-style gadgetry.

Q Tires feature retractable studs that emerge when the driver flicks a switch inside the car. When the snow and ice melt, all it takes is another flip of the switch—and voila—the studs hide back under the treads and the tires are transformed again.

The company’s founder, Michael O’Brien, grew up in southern California and probably never gave much thought to winter tires. But then he married and moved to the Midwest, where he soon grew weary of the ritual of putting the chains on his car and taking them off.

O’Brien hatched the retractable

studded tire idea and developed a prototype about five years ago. As of March 20, the South Carolina-based company had raised \$8.8 million for its startup costs, much of it from individual wealthy investors, said Sean Chariker, the company’s marketing director.

The attention-gripping brand name hints James Bond’s gadget master, Q, and the spiked tires that gave Bond’s Aston Martin extra traction in the 2002 film “Die Another Day.”

“It’s a product which like so many in this country was invented by someone who said, ‘By God, there’s got to be a better way,’” said Bruce Starr, a company spokesman.

The company plans to have its newfangled tire, dubbed the Q Celsius, in test markets this summer, to be followed by a broader product rollout by the end of the year.

CRUISIN’

1942 Mopars

By GREG ZYLA
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Q: Greg, your recent column about the value of a 1942 Dodge was right on. Also, you are correct that there was no car production from 1943-45, but there was not much during 1942 either, which is why there aren’t many ‘42 models around today.

A: As you point out, Dodge production was only 68,000 for ‘42 models. That’s because the federal government ordered a stop to civilian production in February 1942. It wasn’t until late 1945 that the factories began shifting production back

to civilian vehicles.

My favorite ‘42 Mopars are the DeSotos with the hidden headlights. Also unique are the small run of “blackout” models produced by many of the manufacturers just before production finally ceased. The blackouts are very rare and highly collectable today. — Chris Barbieri, Montpelier, Vt.

A: Chris, thanks much for your letter. The blackout models you mention are indeed rare and interesting. They were instituted by direct order from Washington, D.C., so that no car manufacturer would have a sales advantage while the use of raw materials were regulated due to the war. Thus, no new cars could be delivered

with exposed stainless steel or chrome trim with the exception of bumpers, bumper guards, and windshield wipers. The resulting cars were dubbed “blackout specials” or “blackout models.”

As for that 1942 DeSoto, it was indeed a very nice car, and was officially dubbed the Series S-10C Custom Club Coupe. DeSoto production in 1942 totaled just 25,000 cars, with your favorite two-door Club Coupe model coming in at just 2,236 units. All ‘42 DeSotos were powered by inline 236-inch six-cylinder engines producing 115 horsepower.

Write to Greg Zyla in care of King Features Weekly Service, P.O. Box 536475, Orlando, FL 32853-6475, or send an e-mail to gzy-la@ptd.net.

Life & Style

For the love of dog

By MIKE WISE

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WASHINGTON—Below a dirt path, where darkness had settled in and the only semblance of civilization was the headlights of commuters on Canal Road racing home to the suburbs, I looked around to see if anyone could hear or see me. From the neck down, I had been submerged in freezing water for about three minutes, unable to climb back onto the ice, through which I had fallen. I could not feel my hands or my forearms.

My dog, Looly, began to pace back and forth on the trail above, going back down but never getting too near the ice. “This is it,” I thought, looking up toward her, my heart nearly pushing through my chest.

I had but one other thought at that moment: Who’s going to take care of the dog? How’s she going to get home?

I wish I could say my feelings then were a last act of love and concern for my pet. But that’s not the truth. The truth is, by worrying about Looly at the exact moment of my own crucible, I didn’t have to focus on myself. I didn’t have to deal with my reality: I was alone. I was scared. And I was going to die that way.

■ ■ ■

We had set out on that January evening on our usual run along the C&O Canal in Washington’s Georgetown. I had parked and fed the meter enough quarters to give us an hour and a half. An easy six miles—with a rest and stretch after three miles and all the potty breaks Looly needed—would put us back at the car, I figured, no later than 6:45 p.m. Washington had had several straight nights in the low 20s, and I noticed a layer of ice on the canal.

Starting at the one-mile marker, with darkness approaching, I knew few other runners would be on the trail, and that was just fine. For a year and a half, the solitary ritual of my dog and me monotonously putting our feet and paws in front of one another—striding slowly past mallard ducklings in the spring and whitetail deer peering through barren stalks of oak in November—created the illusion of living in the country. A mile out on that trail, it was impossible to know we had passed a Ralph Lauren store 15 minutes earlier.

Out on the C&O, which spans an incredible 184.5 miles from Washington to Cumberland, Md., a person can process things and let go. Plumb the heart and gut. Use the mind as a distiller. Then rid the body of it all on the way back to the car.

That night, I was thinking about my job; my sister, Valeska, back home in Northern California, worried sick over my pregnant niece; and Michael Wilbon, my friend and colleague, who had suffered a heart attack the night before, at age 49, while sleeping beside his wife, Sheryl. As I trudged along that night, contemplating Wilbon’s brush with death, I was put in touch with my own mortality at age 44. I had promised myself I would slow down after a minor health scare a week before Thanksgiving, but I hadn’t.

A slight woman with long, dark hair was running by herself in front of us for almost two miles until she turned off at a bridge just before the four-mile marker on the canal. Looly, whom I had allowed to run unleashed—legally a no-no in the national park—tried to catch up with her several times. But the woman seemed uninterested.

I remember thinking, I wonder if she’s turning off because it’s now dark and she has a 6-foot-4 stranger follow-

ing her. Lit by the streetlights on Canal Road and rays of moonlight illuminating the 12-foot-wide towpath, visibility on the first two miles is usually good. But as my feet pounded the two-by-fours on the long wooden bridge that ends just before our three-mile turnaround—maybe 200 yards before Chain Bridge—it was hard to make out much on the ground.

woods behind the headstone. The perfectly smooth surface of the frozen canal looked like Wollman Rink in New York’s Central Park after a Zamboni had buffed its surface snow white, before anyone could shave the ice with skates.

I continued stretching for at least two minutes and looked around for Looly again.

This time, I was surprised to see she had ven-

“I was alone. I was scared. And I was going to die that way.”

I stopped and stretched my calves by holding onto an ancient cement marker that resembles a grave-stone. I absently threw a stick ahead on the towpath for Looly, hoping to keep her entertained while I stretched. The stick ricocheted off the ground and onto the ice a few feet from the bank. My dog went down gingerly, curiously, and I seem to remember encouraging her to scavenge for a piece of ice near the shore because she looked thirsty.

As I stretched, I could barely make out the engraved words on that weathered cement marker. Looly was unsure of herself, puzzled over where the water had gone, and she quickly returned to the towpath and meandered into the

tured out onto the ice, all the way to the middle, about 30 feet offshore. She seemed to be headed for the other side, where some of the water was unfrozen and, in her canine mind, drinkable.

“Looly! Get back here!”

She turned around and took two steps toward me before the ice broke.

■ ■ ■

In the summer of 2006, my friend and I pulled up to a breeder’s home in Poolsville, Md. I had tried every kind of search of every regional animal shelter for six months without being able to find a companion.

I had wanted a dog since

Queenie died in 1993. Valeska and I found her, a stray puppy on our doorstep, in Hawaii 17 years before. Named by my fourth-grade sister for Queen Liliuokalani, the islands’ last reigning monarch, she was a medium-size collie mix with thick, black fur and a white mane.

Queenie was the most intuitive animal I had ever known. She sensed your mood, especially sadness and grief. When my mother unexpectedly died in July 1993, Queenie, who by then had cataracts, could not hear well and had only several months left herself, would clickety-clack her tired paws across the kitchen linoleum after each emotional phone call that summer. She would bury her nose in my lap until I acknowledged her. If a dog could say, “I’m sorry for your loss,” it would be Queenie. Our first dog, Kaiser, a German shepherd puppy, was brought home when I was 4 and Valeska was 2. When our parents were separating and we saw things children should not see, I would open the sliding door to the back yard and lay my head on Kaiser’s stomach as he slept.

I had now been without a dog for almost 13 years, my sportswriting jobs in New York and Washington dominating my time and life. One day I walked into The Post and told an assistant editor, “I’m getting a dog.” To which the editor replied: “You can’t have a dog. You travel too much.”

But I knew it was time.

Victoria, the woman who raised and sold the yellow Lab-golden retriever mix puppies with the cute blond eyelashes in Poolsville, steered me away from newborns and said I’d be better off with a three- to four-month-old dog because I lived alone. There were three left in the litter—two girls and a boy. The boy was rambunctious beyond belief, rolling in mud as soon as we got him out of his pen.

His sisters were bashful and a little afraid of men for some reason. One in particular, the thinner of the two, wasn’t overly excited about anything. But she kept following me each time I walked away, a fact my friend Dani noticed.

“She picked you,” Dani said.

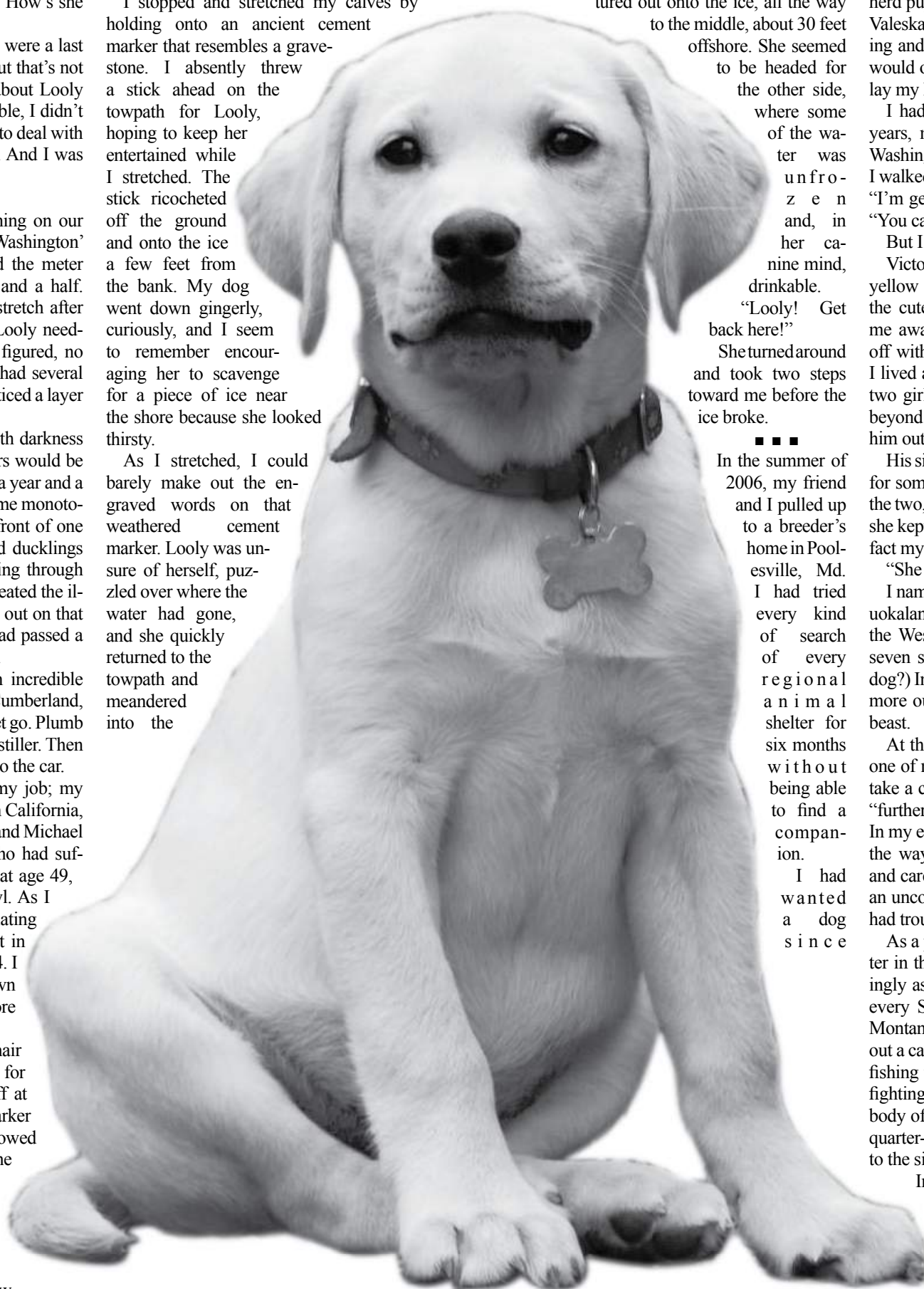
I named her Talula Luca Copacabana Lola Liliuokalani Wise—a.k.a. Looly. (The dogs that win the Westminster Dog Show always have six or seven snooty names, so why not my mix-breed dog?) In a year’s time, the shy, gangly girl became more outgoing and grew into a robust 65-pound beast.

At the back of my 2007 calendar, under goals, one of my listings included using my vacation to take a cross-country trip with Looly so we could “further bond.” I actually wrote that about a dog. In my experience, animals had yet to let me down the way people had. They just craved affection and care and feeding. And they reciprocated with an unconditional love—a trust and loyalty I once had trouble finding in myself.

As a puppy, she had been frightened of the water in the canal when we ran, and watched longingly as a trio of Labs swan-dived into the gunk every Saturday. But now, as we rolled through Montana, she jumped into the Powder River without a care. She leapt into the Yellowstone during a fishing trip, and the roiling Gallatin the next day, fighting the current to work her way across the body of water and fetch the stick I had thrown. A quarter-mile downstream, she would fight to get to the side, shake herself off and want more.

In the Colorado River during our trip back, Looly had tried to swim upstream to where I was standing and had gotten caught in a slow, steady riffle, unable to make progress. After two minutes,

See FOR THE LOVE on next page



Heston leaves behind cinematic, political mark

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Nancy Reagan was heartbroken over Charlton Heston's death. President Bush hailed him as a "strong advocate for liberty," while John McCain called Heston a devotee for civil and constitutional rights.

Even Michael Moore, who mocked Heston in his gun-control documentary "Bowling for Columbine," posted the actor's picture on his Web site to mark his passing.

Heston, who died Saturday night at 84, was a towering figure both in his politics and

on screen, where his characters had the ear of God (Moses in "The Ten Commandments"), survived apocalyptic plagues ("The Omega Man") and endured one of Hollywood's most-grueling action sequences (the chariot race in "Ben-Hur," which earned him the best-actor Academy Award).

Better known in recent years as a fierce gun-rights advocate who headed the National Rifle Association, Heston played legendary leaders and ordinary men hurled into heroic struggles.

"In taking on epic and com-

manding roles, he showed himself to be one of our nation's most gifted actors, and his legacy will forever be a part of our cinema," Republican presidential candidate McCain said in a statement that also noted Heston's involvement in the civil-rights movement and his stand against gun control.

Heston's jutting jaw, regal bearing and booming voice served him well as Marc Antony in "Julius Caesar" and "Antony

and Cleopatra," Michelangelo in "The Agony and the Ecstasy," John the Baptist in "The Greatest Story Ever Told" and an astronaut on a topsy-turvy world where simians rule in "Planet of the Apes."

"Charlton Heston was seen by the world as larger than life," Heston's family said in a statement.

"We knew him as an adoring husband, a kind and devoted father, and a gentle grandfather with an infectious sense of hu-



Heston

FOR THE LOVE

From Page 18

I started to worry and rushed down the side of a hill to get closer to where she was. She abandoned the quest and swam to the bank, shaking every drop-let off her and onto me.

I had felt a rush of panic for a few fleeting moments. But she wanted to go back out immediately. She was no longer a timid girl. The summer had made her courageous.

■ ■ ■

"Come on, baby! Come on!"

I kept yelling, running along the bank frantically as Looly flailed her legs in the freezing water. The C&O Canal, I would later learn, is about 60 feet across at that point—and Looly was out at least 30 feet, past dead center.

She worked hard to get her forelegs onto a sheet of ice able to support her weight, but her paws kept sliding off. Once. Twice. Three times. Maybe four. The more determined her effort, the more violently Looly plunged beneath the surface in a series of loud splashes. She began whimpering, looking at me helplessly before she went under once more.

Without thinking, I lowered myself carefully down a four-foot bank onto the ice. I had seen a show on cable in which an outdoorsman demonstrated how to distribute his weight on the ice by lying flat. I figured if I could slide on my rear end out close to where she was, Looly would feel a pang of adrenaline and pull herself up on the ice, toward me.

Why I believed, even for a moment, that ice broken by a 65-pound dog would not cave in under my 200-plus pounds, I am not sure. But I knew the surface had to be thicker closer to the shore, and I was making steady progress. I had come within five feet of Looly and was reaching for her forelegs when the ice broke again. I plunged completely under. The chill of the water shocked me like a dental drill hitting an exposed nerve. I spit and tried not to swallow, but I could not rid my mouth of the canal's contents, a gravel-like texture that tasted of sulfur. I moved toward where Looly had

fallen through. Now we both flailed. I had played out the scenarios as I was sliding toward her, and what I came up with was this:

I fall through to a bottom of probably four or five feet, get my footing, lift Looly onto ice thick enough to hold her and fight my way back up on the ice myself. The canal, so tranquil during the spring and summer, was a body of still water. Its only apparent danger seemed to be its pea-green and brownish color, its dirty sediment and lingering stench. But I couldn't touch bottom. And I couldn't lift Looly while trying to keep myself afloat. Within a minute, I knew we were both in trouble.

I turned back toward the shore and lunged forward, trying to get my torso up on the ice. But every time I got my forearms up, the ice broke again, and I went under.

Within two minutes, I couldn't feel my hands. My lower extremities were beginning to feel numb, too. Looly was in worse shape. She had been in the water a minute longer than I had, and her frantic paddling had slowed to short, measured strokes. She kept trying to rest her paws on my back and my arms, to keep her head above water. I could feel her claws digging into my back. She didn't have long.

I tried two more times to lurch my upper body up onto the ice, but each time it broke again, and I was briefly submerged. I was still very close to the middle of the canal, and the numbness had now spread to my forearms. I still couldn't stand.

The small pool of water we shared was just a few feet from where we had fallen through. The ice couldn't bear the weight of my lunging, but I found a stable piece thick enough to rest on and keep my head out of the water. I propped my left arm up, like a kid leaning against the side of a community swimming pool in the deep end. Then, resting the back of my neck and head against another corner of the punctured ice, I put my right arm under the dog, just below her abdomen, like a large fishing hook.

I was kicking to stay afloat. I didn't have much strength left when I jerked my right arm upward as hard as I could, us-

ing it to catapult Looly out. As her hind legs began to clear the water, I shoved her bottom for good measure. She just made it onto the ice.

Amazingly, it didn't crack. She scampered up the bank, a bit disoriented, and shook off for a good, long while—sprinting down the towpath like she always does when she gets out of the water. She soon came back and seemed to realize her owner was in danger.

I had been in the freezing water for about three minutes, I figured. I half-remembered reading an article that said hypothermia could set in between four and seven minutes. In the article, a man fell off a log into a freezing stream. He grabbed a branch to prevent himself from being taken downstream, but none of his companions could reach him. Resigning himself to his fate, the man calmly gave an oral living will to his grief-stricken friends above, knowing he would lose all feeling soon and eventually drift away to an icy death.

I drew in deep breaths and paused maybe 10 seconds. I figured I had one minute, maybe two, of physical exertion left. I felt nothing in my hands and arms, which just slid off the ice each time I tried to pull myself up. The thickness of the ice had supported the dog's weight closer to shore, but now I couldn't break it solely with my hands. The solitude I had enjoyed moments earlier was now a terrifying loneliness.

I began to consider my options and arrived at a plan I should have thought of before I went in after her.

"HELP! HELP! PLEASE. SOMEBODY. ANYBODY. HELP!!!"

After yelling, I once more tried to hoist my body out of the water. But my hands no longer felt like they were part of me. Suddenly, I didn't feel cold or frozen. And that, I would learn later, meant I was heading into stage two of hypothermia. I remember leaning my elbows on the ice for balance and looking at Looly pacing along the bank.

I wanted to believe there was an internal survival mechanism that would kick in, an uberhuman force that would enable me to rescue myself. But losing muscular function prevents

those surreal endings. Humans are said to be able to survive in freezing water for up to 15 minutes, but by then the metabolism has slowed to a crawl and we are unable to perform the easiest of physical tasks. I was thinking all those things when I heard footsteps on the towpath.

A young man emerged from the darkness. He had dark hair and was wearing running clothes. I could tell by his labored breathing he had been on a long run. He began to walk down the bank.

"Hey, so what are you doing in the ice?" he said.

"Can you give me your hand?" I asked. I remember my tone being desperate, panicked.

At first he looked confused, like a student who had walked into the wrong classroom. But then he took another step, a few feet off the bank. Both his feet went through the ice, and he was in maybe up to his knees. He took another step, making sure he got his footing. I lunged toward him through the water, grabbing the ice as best as I could, and for the first time I felt the sensation of the bottom.

"I can stand, I can stand."

Of all the things in my life that have given me relief from physical pain or emotional grief—massage, medication, the support of my sister and friends—nothing equaled the exhilarating feeling of touching the bottom of the C&O Canal that night. I later learned that the canal was built with a deep center channel, and that the drop-off was sharp and steep less than 10 feet from shore.

In saying "I can stand," what I really meant was: "I'm going to live."

I began to move forward as the young runner broke the surface by pushing his feet through the ice. I thought he was knee-deep in the water, but he was actually up to his chest when I began to take large steps and break the ice immediately in front of me. Suddenly, there was a narrow pathway carved through the ice, leading to shore. I reached for him and, together, we made it up the bank and out.

I sat on the ground shivering, soaked and frozen, my knees nearly pulled toward my chest, my heart pumping wildly. As I was catching my breath, I recall

mor. He served these far greater roles with tremendous faith, courage and dignity."

The actor died at his home in Beverly Hills with his wife, Lydia, at his side, family spokesman Bill Powers said. He declined to comment on the cause of death or provide further details Sunday.

One of the biggest box-office draws of the 1950s, '60s and '70s, Heston's work dwindled largely to small parts and narration and other voice roles from the 1980s on, including an uncredited cameo as an ape in Tim Burton's 2001 remake of "Plan-

et of the Apes."

Shirley Jones, who co-starred with Heston in one of his last leading roles in the 1999 drama "Gideon," said his talent as an actor sometimes is forgotten because of the epic characters he played.

"To me, he was the consummate leading man. He was tall, he was handsome, he was sensitive, he was gruff when he had to be. He was a great cowboy, he was perfect for those historical roles," Jones said. "He could do everything, and there aren't many actors around today who could."

saying: "Thanks. Thanks a lot. You really helped me out."

"What were you doing in there?" he asked. He still seemed a little uncertain about what had just transpired.

"My ... my dog. She fell in. I had to go get her out."

"You want me to call 911 for you?" he asked.

"I'm just frozen. I just need to thaw out. I'll be all right. Can you check on me on your way back?"

He said he was going toward Georgetown, meaning I would not see him again. I knew there was a bathroom at Fletcher's Cove, where daytime visitors can rent boats and kayaks on the adjacent Potomac River. If it was open, I told him, I would warm up in there. If I felt dizzy or in trouble, I could cross the wooden bridge there and walk up to Canal Road and flag down a car for help.

"You sure?" he asked.

"Yeah, yeah."

His body was soaked and cold, and he wanted to stay warm by continuing his run. As he sped off, I yelled: "Hey, wait. What's your name?"

"Jason," he said. "Jason Coates."

"Where do you work?"

"I'm a law student at GW (George Washington University)."

As he disappeared back into the darkness, Looly approached me and licked my forehead. She had dried off as best as she could, but the water on her chest had crystallized into frozen droplets.

"Good girl, good girl," I said, running my fingers through her wet fur. As she sat down beside me, I curled up in a fetal position for maybe three minutes and sobbed.

■ ■ ■

Shaken, unsure of my gait, I staggered like a woozy boxer toward Fletcher's Cove and don't remember seeing anyone. My hands were still frozen stiff but my legs began to warm.

When Looly and I got there, the bathroom was open and had a blower for drying your hands. For maybe the next 30 minutes, I directed the dryer to my hands, arms and chest. I discarded the thick, cotton sweatshirt and hung it over a bathroom stall. I wrung as much water as I could out of my running shirt. I looked

at myself in the mirror. My torso was bright pink. My face was ghost white and my pupils were enlarged. My heart still pounded violently.

I learned later that cold-water immersion is best when first thawing frozen hands and fingers. The blower felt like sewing needles stabbing into my fingertips. But within 20 minutes, I had close-to-normal feeling again.

I walked to Canal Road twice, halfheartedly trying to flag a car down and get a ride back to Georgetown. But drivers were zooming by at close to 50 mph, and I didn't want the dog getting near the road.

Shivering in 35-degree weather, I walked back down to the bathroom and used the dryer for another five minutes. Still flush with adrenaline, I ran as hard as I possibly could the next two-plus miles to the car. Looly never ventured near the canal the entire way and stayed within six inches of my back heel.

When I got to the meter it had expired, but there was no ticket.

■ ■ ■

I want to remember the feeling of getting home and running a hot bath that night—and then of cradling a reluctant Looly and carefully depositing her in the same bath water after I got out—of massaging her paws, her ears and kissing her forehead, of drying her off and then having to wage a tug of war for her shredded bath towel.

I want to remember calling Valeska in California and hearing her voice.

I want to remember exchanging messages with Wilbon that night. He was having heart surgery the next day, and I told him he was in my prayers, but I didn't reveal my own close call.

I want to remember waking the next morning, a morning I almost never saw, and Looly, having jumped up on the bed, fully stretching out her frame, nudging closer and closer, until our noses were six inches apart.

I want to remember everything about that run back to the car, our hearts pulsating together in a single, metronomic beat. We were still a little frozen and still a little terrified even though we were on solid ground, back on our path. We were racing home and into all the days still ahead of us.

'21' doubles up with \$15M weekend

LOS ANGELES (AP) -- The gambling tale "21" kept up its winning streak as it took in \$15.1 million to stay on top of the box office for a second-straight weekend, leaving George Clooney's "Leatherheads" and the family tale "Nim's Island" to scrimmage for second place.

"Leatherheads" — a 1920s football comedy directed by Clooney, who co-stars with Renee Zellweger and John Krasinski — had a soft opening of \$13.5 million, below distributor Universal's expectations.

20th Century Fox's "Nim's Island" was right behind with \$13.3 million. The family adventure centers on a bold girl (Abigail Breslin) alone on an island and her e-mail pen pal

(Jodie Foster), an obsessive-compulsive, shut-in author.

"Leatherheads" and "Nim's Island" were so close that their rankings could switch after final weekend numbers are re-

leased Monday. Yet "Leatherheads" earned mixed reviews and mainly drew theatergoers in their 30s and 40s, failing to connect with younger crowds that are the box office's mainstay, according to Universal.

"I'm disappointed for us, I'm disappointed for George. I think he's a great guy and think he's got tons of directing talent," said Nikki Rocco, head of distribution for Universal. "I wish I could have that crystal ball and tell you what went wrong."

He said some parents who might otherwise have gone to see "Leatherheads" may have been tied up taking children to see "Nim's Island" or the family hit "Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who!"

1. "21," \$15.1 million.
2. "Leatherheads," \$13.5 million.
3. "Nim's Island," \$13.3 million.
4. "Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who!," \$9.1 million.
5. "The Ruins," \$7.8 million.
6. "Superhero Movie," \$5.4 million.
7. "Tyler Perry's Meet the Browns," \$3.51 million.
8. "Drillbit Taylor," \$3.5 million.
9. "Shutter," \$2.9 million.
10. "10,000 B.C.," \$2.8 million.

leased Monday.

"Leatherheads" is Clooney's third directing effort, a commercial turn after his acclaimed Edward R. Murrow drama "Good Night, and Good Luck" and the Chuck Barris fantasy thriller "Confessions of a Dangerous Mind."

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Nim's Island

Friday	4:00	7:20	9:30
Saturday	1:00	4:00	7:20
Sunday	1:00	4:00	7:20
Mon thru Thurs	4:00	7:20	

Jodie Foster, Abigail Breslin
 Comedy, Adventure • Rated PG

College Road Trip

Friday	4:25	7:05	9:35
Saturday	1:25	4:25	7:05
Sunday	1:25	4:25	7:05
Mon thru Thurs	4:25	7:05	

Martin Lawrence, Raven Symone
 Comedy • Rated G

Leatherheads

Friday	4:30	7:25	9:40
Saturday	1:30	4:30	7:25
Sunday	1:30	4:30	7:25
Mon thru Thurs	4:30	7:25	

George Clooney, Renee Zellweger
 Sports, Comedy • Rated PG13

Drillbit Taylor

Friday	4:10	7:15	10:00
Saturday	1:20	4:10	7:15
Sunday	1:20	4:10	7:15
Mon thru Thurs	4:10	7:15	

Owen Wilson, Alex Frost
 Comedy • Rated PG13

Superhero Movie

Friday	4:15	7:00	9:45
Saturday	1:10	4:15	7:00
Sunday	1:10	4:15	7:00
Mon thru Thurs	4:15	7:00	

Drake Bell, Sara Paxton
 Comedy, Satire • Rated PG13

Synopsis

After being bitten by a genetically altered dragonfly, high school loser Rick Riker develops superhuman abilities like incredible strength and armored skin. Rick decides to use his new powers for good and becomes a costumed crime fighter known as "The Dragonfly." However, standing in the way of his destiny is the villainous Lou Landers. After an experiment gone wrong, Lou develops the power to steal a person's life force and in a dastardly quest for immortality becomes the supervillain, "The Hourglass."

Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears A Who

Friday	4:20	@	@
Saturday	1:15	4:20	@
Sunday	1:15	4:20	@
Mon thru Thurs	4:20	@	

Jim Carrey (v), Steve Carell (v)
 Family, Animated • Rated G

Definitely Maybe

Friday	4:05	@	@
Saturday	1:05	4:05	@
Sunday	1:05	4:05	@
Mon thru Thurs	4:05	@	

Ryan Reynolds, Abigail Breslin
 Romantic Comedy • Rated PG13

10,000 BC

Friday	@	7:10	9:50
Saturday	@	7:10	9:50
Sunday	@	7:10	
Mon thru Thurs	@	7:10	

Omar Sharif, Steven Strait
 Drama, Adventure • Rated PG13

Never Back Down

Friday	@	7:30	9:55
Saturday	@	7:30	9:55
Sunday	@	7:30	
Mon thru Thurs	@	7:30	

Sean Faris, Djimon Hounsou
 Action, Drama • Rated PG13

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AP

In this image released by Universal Pictures George Clooney, center, leads the huddle in a scene from "Leatherheads."

20th Century Fox, which had been tracking "Nim's Island" slightly ahead of "Leatherheads," was pleased with the results of its film, said distribution executive Chris Aronson.

"This movie was targeted for families, and we hit the families," Aronson said of "Nim's Island."

Sony's "21," featuring Kevin Spacey, Kate Bosworth and Jim

Sturgess in a Vegas blackjack romp, raised its 10-day total to \$46.5 million.

Overall, however, it was another dreary weekend for Hollywood, where business has lagged nearly every weekend since January. The top 12 movies took in \$80.9 million, down 27 percent from the same weekend last year.

Revenues are at \$2.24 bil-

lion so far this year, off 1.8 percent from 2007, according to box-office tracker Media By Numbers. Factoring in higher ticket prices, movie attendance is running 5 percent behind last year's.

This weekend's other new wide release—Paramount's horror story "The Ruins," about tourists who discover an ancient evil during a jungle trip — debuted at No. 5 with \$7.8 million.

In narrower release, Martin Scorsese's Rolling Stones concert film "Shine a Light," distributed by Paramount Vantage, did fair business with \$1.5 million.

Wong Kar Wai's romantic drama "My Blueberry Nights," starring singer Norah Jones and Jude Law, Rachel Weisz, Natalie Portman and David Strathairn, took in a solid \$73,742 opening in six theaters.

Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at U.S. and Canadian theaters, according to Media By Numbers LLC. Final figures will be released Monday.

TOP OF THE CHARTS

Editor's Note: As of March 29, 2008

Top 10 Pop Singles This Week Last Week

1. Usher feat. Young Jeezy No. 1 "Love In This Club" (LaFace)
2. Chris Brown No. 2 "With You" (Jive)
3. Flo Rida feat. T-Pain No. 3 "Low" (Poe Boy)
4. Sara Bareilles No. 4 "Love Song" (Epic)
5. Rihanna No. 5 "Don't Stop the Music" (SRP/Def Jam)
6. Jordin Sparks duet with Chris Brown No. 6 "No Air" (19/Jive)
7. Ray J & Yung Berg No. 7 "Sexy Can I" (Knockout/Deja 34)
8. Leona Lewis No. 21 "Bleeding Love" (Syco/3)
9. Timbaland feat. OneRepublic No. 8 "Apologize" (Mosley/Blackground)
10. Lupe Fiasco feat. Matthew Santos No. 10 "Superstar" (1st & 15th)



Flo Rida

3. Trace Adkins No. 5 "You're Gonna Miss This" (Capitol Nashville)
4. Rodney Atkins No. 4 "Cleaning This Gun (Come On In Boy)" (Curb)
5. Kenny Chesney No. 3 "Shiftwork" (BNA)
6. Chris Cagle No. 7 "What Kinda Gone" (RCA)
7. George Strait No. 8 "I Saw God Today" (MCA Nashville)
8. Chuck Wicks No. 6 "Stealing Cinderella" (RCA)
9. James Otto No. 10 "Just Got Started Lovin' You" (Warner Bros.)
10. Jason Aldean No. 9 "Laughed Until We Cried" (Broken Bow)

TOP TEN VIDEO, DVD

Top 10 Video Rentals

1. No Country for Old Men (R) Tommy Lee Jones (Disney/Miramax)
2. Bee Movie (PG) animated (Paramount/DreamWorks)
3. Dan in Real Life (PG-13) Steve Carell (Disney/Touchstone)
4. Hitman (R) Timothy Olyphant (Fox)
5. Into the Wild (R) Emile Hirsch (Paramount)
6. Beowulf (PG-13) Ray Winstone (Paramount)
7. August Rush (PG) Freddy Highmore (Warner)
8. American Gangster (R) Denzel Washington (Universal)
9. Nancy Drew (PG) Emma Roberts (Warner)
10. 30 Days of Night (R) Josh Hartnett (Sony Pictures)

Top 10 DVD Sales

1. 101 Dalmations: Platinum Edition (G) (Walt Disney)
2. Mr. Magorium's Wonder Emporium (G) (20th Century Fox)
3. Beowulf (PG-13) (Paramount)
4. Into the Wild (R) (Paramount Vintage)
5. American Gangster (R) (Universal)
6. 30 Days of Night (R) (Sony Pictures)
7. Barbie: Mariposa and Her Butterfly Fairy Friends (NR) (Universal)
8. Awake (R) (Genius Products)
9. Michael Clayton (R) (Warner)
10. Dr. Seuss' Horton Hears a Who: Deluxe Collection (NR) (Warner)

Top 10 Hot Country Singles

1. Alan Jackson No. 2 "Small Town Southern Man" (Arista Nashville)
2. Carrie Underwood No. 1 "All-American Girl" (Arista)

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David Hallberg: A new prince of ballet

By LYNNE HEFFLEY
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At 25, David Hallberg has the classic male dancer's physique and a growing collection of verbal bouquets for his artistry and technical aplomb.

But according to critics and colleagues alike, he has something rarer too: a timeless elegance that belies his age and all-American roots.

As Kevin McKenzie, the artistic director of American Ballet Theatre, puts it, the South Dakota-born, Arizona-raised Hallberg "has unusual qualities for a male dancer that not too many through the generations have had—the potential for the danseur noble."

In Los Angeles last week, Hallberg took the role of Prince Siegfried opposite his frequent partner, Michele Wiles, playing Odette in the opening performance of ABT's "Swan Lake" at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. He was also to dance in the four-day run's closing Sunday matinee with Julie Kent.

The ABT principal made his "Swan Lake" debut in 2004. It was his first full-length story ballet, and the experience, he recalled recently, was "pretty monumental"—a tutorial in pacing, in learning when to rest and "when to just blast it out 110 percent."

Now, he said, each performance is an opportunity for discovery.

"As a dancer, the steps stay the same," he explained. "As an artist, the character is constantly evolving. Often, what happens spontaneously ends up being the most interesting aspect of how you portray the character."

Ballet today, he said, "is an interesting balance between upholding tradition and history and not letting it get dusty. I think that's something ABT is very good at."

Such thoughtfulness is characteristic of Hallberg, who, it turns



David Hallberg, 25, is making a fast ascent to ballet royalty.

out, has been working in ballet for a mere dozen years. He started formal training at 13, older than many beginners, after studying jazz dance and tap from ages 9 to 12 at the School of Ballet Arizona in Phoenix. He was taught by the school's then-director, former Boston Ballet soloist Kee-Juan Han, who now heads the Washington School of Ballet.

The arts weren't big in his family, but Hallberg's parents not only recognized their son's "obsession," they nurtured it, he said. "It's such a cliché, but it really was a calling. I was just drawn to it," he said.

A childhood fascination with actor-dancer Fred Astaire's black-tie elegance could also have been an influence. "Maybe that rubbed off a little bit," he said.

Han says that his former student's poise and regal bearing were evident from the start: "It's very innate, you're just born with it."

But he says that Hallberg also thrived on four years of rigorous training as a teenager and still approaches class as a learning process rather than a warmup to go onstage.

"Choreographers and directors and teachers like working with him because of that full concentration on his art form," Han said.

Hallberg left home at 16 to study at the Paris Opera Ballet School, did two stints in ABT's summer program and joined the Studio Company in 2000. He was accepted into the corps de ballet the following year and

named a soloist in 2004 and a principal in 2006.

The pace of that ascent may not have been what he wished for.

"When you join the company, you want to be a principal in a day," he said, but "that's not how a flower blooms and not how an artist blooms. It takes time and effort."

Indeed, a serious shoulder injury three years ago that required five months' recovery was a blessing in disguise, he said, forcing him to "step away from the art form and realize life outside the ballet—outside culture, in a sense. It was an eye-opener, because when I graduated high school, I had started my professional career."

All the same, the young dancer stood out from the start with "an amazing facility for ballet," Wiles says. "You couldn't be any more perfect than that. He had the legs, the feet, and he's extremely handsome. He had everything any male dancer could want."

But much to learn about partnering, Hallberg said.

"A lot relies on spontaneity and instinct, feeling what (a ballerina) needs, how much power to give her and how to let her do her own thing. You can be out there by yourself, but you're essentially telling a story with someone else, so it's great when you read each other and really just listen to each other."

Now Hallberg is looking to the future. To prepare for his debut as the prince in ABT's "Giselle" this summer, he recently flew to Amsterdam to meet with former ABT principal Guillaume Graffin, a ballet master at the Dutch National Ballet.

"We dissected the character and that was really beneficial and productive," he said.

His desire to further his evolution as an artist also includes plans for roles that are the antithesis of ballet's romantic princes.

"I dream to do the exact opposite," he said.

Father: Irwin went through 'pain and suffering'

BRISBANE, Australia (AP)—The late television star Steve Irwin concealed "a lot of pain and suffering" behind his ever-enthusiastic, khaki-clad "Crocodile Hunter" public persona, his father said in an interview to be broadcast Monday.

In the Australian Broadcasting Corp. interview, Bob Irwin, 68, also spoke about leaving the zoo that he founded 36 years ago in northeastern Queensland state and that his son developed into an international tourist attraction.

Bob Irwin reminisced about his son who had become an internationally famous movie and television personality before he was fatally stung by a stingray on the Great Barrier Reef in 2006 at the age of 44.

He said audiences failed to realize how much pain Steve

Irwin masked in his public performances, though gave no details of the reasons for his son's private suffering.

"People don't realize just how much he gave of himself," his father said.

"He was always very good in front of the media, and a lot of the pain and the suffering didn't show through," he added without elaborating.

Bob Irwin said although he shared his only son's passion for wildlife conservation, he was less comfortable with being in the public eye.

"I don't have the talent with the media that Steve had. To be perfectly honest with you, the media frighten me," the father said. "I would much rather catch crocodiles than sit here talking to the camera."

Last month, Bob Irwin left

Australia Zoo, amid rumors that he had fallen out with his son's American widow, Terri.

He did little to squash those rumors, saying that he was leaving the family-run zoo because he had become a "disruptive influence," without elaborating on what he meant. In Monday's interview, he pointedly leaves out his daughter-in-law when listing the people at the zoo whom he would miss.

Bob Irwin and his second wife, Judy, plan to continue their conservation work on a property near the Queensland farming town of Kingaroy.

"I just feel that if I can live the rest of my life out doing what Steve would actually want me to do, and do that successfully, then I would be prepared to go and shake hands with him again," the father said.

Guidance of experts can help family heal after pastor abuse

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE



Dear Abby

DEAR ABBY: I'm writing in response to "In True Love in Washington" (Feb. 4), about the 16-year-old who became pregnant by her pastor. What she described is not a "love" relationship; it is an abusive one. A pastor who has a sexual relationship with a member of his congregation is misusing his power, and this constitutes clergy sexual misconduct.

You were correct when you stated that "if there is any 'shaming,'" it should be directed at the pastor. Unfortunately, that is not typically the case. The shaming of victims that follows disclosure is nearly unbearable. Church officials typically collude in denial or cover up the problem. Rarely is there any care for the victim.

For this reason, a sex-abuse therapist and a spiritual director familiar with this type of abuse are helpful in the healing process. In addition, it is vital for the victim and her family to find the support of someone who has lived through clergy sexual misconduct because it is unlikely they will find support in their current circle of friends.

—C.W., MUSKEGON, MICH.

DEAR C.W.: Thank you for sharing some valuable suggestions. The responses to "True Love" offered additional steps for her to consider. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: You were right to point out that "Reverend Ron" is the one in the wrong. However, if the issue is not turned over to the police, the church's investigation may put a different slant on the results. Only law enforcement officers know the questions to ask in order to get the facts as they should be obtained.

—ADA IN OLEAN, N.Y.

DEAR ABBY: Both my husband and I are pastors and have had to deal with a similar situation in our region. Unfortunately, the abuse and misuse of pastoral authority is too prevalent. It is widespread, although not indicative of most clergy, who seek to serve faithfully.

I don't know who is responsible for holding Reverend Ron accountable, but hopefully there are church leaders who will take this situation seriously and not ignore it. Far too many people in the pews feel that it is not their place to hold someone accountable for his/her mistakes. The congregation will need someone trained in dealing with this kind of situation to help them heal as well.

—REVEREND JOANNA

DEAR ABBY: As a therapist, I have helped many people deal with this kind of emotional wreckage. The affair, which the pastor convinced this girl was OK because they were "truly in love," actually falls under the category "sexual abuse by one in a position of trust," and it is a crime. In some states, it may be considered statutory rape.

After being told, the mother should contact the police and the district attorney. Reverend Ron is a sexual predator who has taken advantage of a vulnerable young girl. He needs to be stopped and removed from any and all contact with young teens.

—THERAPIST IN LONGMONT, COLO.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I have been married for six years and have recently fallen in love with another man. But I still love my husband. Is it possible for a person to be in love with two people at the same time?

—KIM FROM THE SUNSHINE STATE

DEAR KIM: It is possible to love more than one person because you love them for different reasons. However, when someone is IN love, he or she is usually completely focused on that one love object. So the answer to your question is no.

■ ■ ■

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

■ ■ ■

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Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes



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CROSSWORD By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Take to the pool

5 Sprite

8 Carrots' mates

12 Stash

13 Wire measure

14 Carry on

15 Vicinity

16 She's not fair

18 Scroll locale

20 No liability

21 "— Town"

22 Addams cousin

23 Offspring

26 Meditated gloomily

30 Rowing need

31 Author Grafton

32 Hostel

33 Porter's place

36 Bamboo eater

38 Clay alias

39 Energy line?

40 Heart Rancher

43 Hubbub

47 Met melody

50 Low voice

51 Fond du —, Wis.

52 Not as much

53 Jai follower

54 Ordinal suffix

55 ABC island series

2 Mario-nette part

3 Notion

4 Lea

5 Fireplace minutia

6 Old Italian money

7 Winter bug

8 "Alla-kazam!"

9 Food of —

10 Initial stake

11 Undo perch

17 Brussels-based org.

19 Helios

22 Rage

23 Weep

24 Standard

25 Exist

26 Purchase

27 Noise

28 Conclusion

29 "CS!" evidence

31 — Lanka

34 1960s dance

35 "In the Valley of —"

36 Church perch

37 Horrify

39 Steal game

40 Swedish music

41 Exam format

42 Santa —, Calif.

43 Converse

44 Sandwich cookie

45 Smooch

46 Dawn direction

48 Beerlike beverage

Solution time: 21 mins.

Yesterday's answer 4-8

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY:

Kirsten Storms, 24; Patricia Arquette, 40; Julian Lennon, 45; Kofi Annan, 70

Happy Birthday: Opportunity will strike when you least expect it and you have to be ready. Don't underestimate your competition. Strive to be a little unique in all that you do and you will stand a better chance of coming out on top. Don't be afraid to think outside the box. Your numbers are 2, 10, 23, 26, 38, 42

ARIES (March 21-April 19): If you have emotional or financial issues to resolve, talk about them now and you will find solutions. Action, not anger should be taken. Change may be required but it will be a step in the right direction and the means to an end. ***

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): Emotions will be running high so hit while the iron's hot. Take care of the things that are bothering you at work and with people you have to deal with. You can gain ground if you put your networking skills to work for you. ***

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Being sentimental about a situation you face or someone you care about will add to your charm and help you promote love and passion. Don't hold back. Be honest about the changes you want in your personal life. ***

CANCER (June 21-July 22): If you are aggressive in your actions, you are likely to get someone's back up. Take an easygoing attitude to problems and complaints. A love problem handled poorly could lead to results that are not redeemable. Think before you take action. ****

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Don't waste time pondering what might be. Instead, turn your option into something memorable—you will prosper emotionally and financially. Love is on the rise and commitments can be made. **

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Cutting corners will backfire but giving your all and adding a little extra detail will pay off. Networking, traveling or talking seriously about your plans and intentions will lead to life-altering results. ****

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Curl up with a good book, movie or the one you love. Have fun and enjoy your time with people who contribute positively to your life. Your state of mind will affect how you react to situations that will have a major impact on your future. ***

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Put on the pressure and you will get people motivated to get their end of things completed. Stay in control and follow through with your ultimatums. A strong presence will bring you the respect you deserve. ***

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You can make changes to your home and start new friendships with people in your community. Your friendly nature and generosity will enable you to build allies quickly. Charm will be the key to winning favors. ***

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Keep things simple and stick close to home. You will accomplish far more than if you

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

have to deal with outsiders. Don't argue about trivial matters; they will pass if you just leave them alone. ****

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Don't dwell on emotional issues that probably don't really concern you. Stay away from neighbors, relatives and peers who bother you and, whatever you do, avoid gossip. You are the one who will be blamed if you meddle in other people's affairs. **

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Put your time and effort into financial gains, professional moves or starting your own small business. You can get ahead if you focus on your talents and seek people who can contribute to your plans. Keep the upper hand and use your charm. ****

Birthday Baby: You are steadfast and stubborn. You are charming and have a powerful presence. You are hard-working, diligent and proud and strive to be the best.

Eugenia's Web sites: astroadvice.com for fun, eugenialast.com for confidential consultations

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku By Dave Green

3 5 9 6 2

4 2 7 6 8

7 2 8 7 9

1 8 7 9 4

5 9 1 3 4 8 6 2 7

6 3 7 1 2 5 9 8 4

4 1 3 9 8 2 7 5 6

8 5 6 4 7 3 2 9 1

7 2 9 6 5 1 8 4 3

Difficulty Level ★★

4/08

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's SUDOKU Answer

9 4 5 2 3 7 1 6 8

1 7 8 5 6 9 4 3 2

3 6 2 8 1 4 5 7 9

2 8 4 7 9 6 3 1 5

5 9 1 3 4 8 6 2 7

6 3 7 1 2 5 9 8 4

4 1 3 9 8 2 7 5 6

8 5 6 4 7 3 2 9 1

7 2 9 6 5 1 8 4 3

Difficulty Level ★

4/07

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally, even backward. Find them and CIRCLE THEIR LETTERS ONLY. DO NOT CIRCLE THE WORD. The leftover letters spell the Wonderword.

LOWERING BLOOD PRESSURE Solution: 10 letters

M L I F E S T Y L E N S T U N

E A G K N U J D O O F L P S P

A C I N D P D N I M I L E M M

S T S N I P P T I M A I U U W

U I S W T L C O I N R P I A E

R V G I I E C T R O N D L Q I

E I U N T M N Y L T O K U S G

M T R E R E E A C S I I C L H

E Y D A I N C T N N T O I I T

N P G E S T K S G C N V N A E

T U Y D K S T L U S E R B S S

S S E L B A T E G E V L L E T

(T) (E) (I) (D) I S T R O K E S A C I

S D Y R I A D N L T R A E H N

I R O T C O D N I E P A I N G

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Activity, Calories, Case, Cycling, Daily, Dairy, Detection, Diet, Doctor, Drugs, Food, Heart, Intake, Junk, Lifestyle, Limit, Live, Maintenance, Measurements, Mind, Neck, Nuts, Pain, Plan, Portions, Prevention, Pump, Quit, Results, Risk, Seeds, Sodium, Stay, Stroke, Sugar, Supplements, Swim, Tablet, Tell, Testing, Used, Vegetables, Walking, Weight, Wine

Yesterday's Answer: Key chain

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IOC president concerned about Tibet



BEIJING (AP)—International Olympic Committee head Jacques Rogge said he was “very concerned” about unrest in Tibet, but downplayed talk of a boycott of the Beijing Games.

“I’m very concerned with the international situation and what’s happening in Tibet,” Rogge said Monday in Beijing.

“The torch relay has been targeted. The International Olympic Committee has expressed its serious concern and calls for a rapid peaceful resolution in Tibet,” Rogge said in a brief speech at the meetings’ opening ceremony.

China is facing rising criticism ahead of the August Olympics on issues from its crackdown on anti-government protests among Tibetans to its close relations with Sudan.

Demonstrators challenging China’s policies in those areas tried to grab the Olympic torch and snuff out the flame as it passed through London on Sunday.

Rogge’s comments were his strongest yet on the growing



IOC President Jacques Rogge signs the host city contract at the Istana or Presidential Palace on Saturday April 5, 2008, in Singapore. Rogge is in Singapore from April 4 to 6 to sign the host city contract for the 2010 Youth Olympic Games.

political storm surrounding the Games, underscoring rising concern over the potential that

such protests would tarnish the Olympic movement.

“Violence for whatever rea-

son is not compatible with the values of the torch relay or the Olympic Games,” Rogge said.

Rogge acknowledged that “some politicians have played with the idea of boycotts,” but added: “As I speak today, however, there is no momentum for a generalized boycott.”

“We need the unity of the Olympic movement to help us overcome the difficulties. Our major responsibility is for offering good games to the athletes who deserve them,” Rogge said. “The athletes deserve and the world expects it, and the unity of the Olympic movement will deliver it.”

Rogge was in the Chinese capital to meet with officials from national Olympic committees and members of the IOC, in the last major consultations ahead of the August Games.

Rogge’s comments follow similar statements over the weekend by the head of an organization overseeing 205 national Olympic committees.

“Any politician who is pushing for a boycott is committing a serious error,” Mario Vazquez Rana, the president the Association of National Olympic Committees, said Saturday in Beijing. “For me a total boycott, a partial boycott, is totally out of

the question,” he said.

Various foreign politicians have floated the idea of staying away from the Games’ opening ceremony. In Saturday editions of *Le Monde*, one of French President Nicolas Sarkozy’s Cabinet ministers was quoted as saying China would have to release political prisoners and open a dialogue with Tibet’s exiled Buddhist leader, the Dalai Lama, for Sarkozy to take part in the Aug. 8 ceremony.

The Tibet protests have thrown a spotlight on China’s human rights record, prompting protests all along the torch relay, which began last month. China’s communist government said 22 have died in violence stemming from protests in Tibet and Tibetan-inhabited regions of western China that turned violent on March 14.

Supporters of the Dalai Lama say up to 140 people have died, including eight killed when security forces fired on protesters on Thursday night. China’s blames the Dalai Lama’s supporters for fomenting the violence and has rejected international calls to open a dialogue to address concerns its policies are harming the region’s traditional Buddhist culture.

Boston heads home at last—and in last place following loss at Toronto



T O - R O N T O
(A P) —
F r a n k

Thomas broke a fifth-inning tie with his 11th career grand slam, Vernon Wells added a two-run homer and the Toronto Blue Jays beat the Boston Red Sox 7-4 to sweep the World Series championships on Sunday.

Boston went 3-4 on its opening three-nation trip to Tokyo, Oakland and Toronto, a journey of nearly 16,000 miles (26,000 kilometers), and is last in the American League East for the first time since April 2005.

Out since mid-March because of a strained lower back, Josh Beckett (0-1) was activated from the disabled list to face Roy Halladay (1-1). Beckett gave up five runs, three hits and four walks in 4 2-3 innings, striking out six.

Halladay allowed four runs and eight hits in eight innings.

Yankees 2, Rays 0

At New York, Wang Chien-ming (2-0) pitched four-hit ball into the seventh inning, Hideki Matsui hit a two-run homer in the fourth off James Shields (1-1) and New Yorks manager Joe Girardi was back on the bench following an illness.

Hitting 99 mph (159 kph), Joba Chamberlain tossed two scoreless innings to set up Mariano Rivera, who fanned two in a 1-2-3 ninth for his third save—a total he didn’t reach last year until May 3.

Royals 3, Twins 1

At Minneapolis, Brett Tomko (1-0) allowed six hits in five

shutout innings, Alex Gordon hit a two-run single and scored after doubling in the seventh.

Kansas City finished its opening trip to Detroit and Minnesota 4-2, its best start since 2004. The Royals had only three winning trips last season, none until May 11-20.

Boof Bonser (0-2) gave up three runs and eight hits in seven innings.

Orioles 3, Mariners 2

At Baltimore, Luis Hernandez singled in the winning run with two outs in the ninth off Mark Lowe (0-1), who also threw a tying wild pitch. Nick Markakis led off the ninth with a double off Eric O’Flaherty and scored on a groundout by Aubrey Huff.

Seattle, without injured closer J.J. Putz, wasted an outstanding performance by Felix Hernandez, who allowed five hits in eight shutout innings as a replacement for former Oriole Erik Bedard, who had an injured hip.

Baltimore is 3-0 against the Mariners after going 2-7 against them last year.

Rangers 10, Angels 4

At Anaheim, California, Gerald Laird had four hits, homered twice and drove in a career-high six runs for Texas.

Laird hit a three-run homer in the fourth off Jon Garland (1-1), his first RBIs of the season, then added a RBI single in the seventh against Darren O’Day and a two-run homer in the ninth off Jason Bulger.

Ben Broussard hit a two-run homer for Texas, which took two of three from Los Angeles.

Vicente Padilla (1-0) gave up four runs—three earned—and nine hits in seven innings, allowing solo homers by Garret Anderson and Torii Hunter.

Indians 2, Athletics 1

At Oakland, California, Cliff Lee (1-0) gave up four hits and struck out four in 6 2-3 innings to win his first start of the season, retiring 10 of his last 12 batters as Cleveland stopped a three-game losing streak.

Joe Borowski, Rafael Perez and Rafael Betancourt completed the four-hitter.

Asdrubal Cabrera hit an RBI groundout in the seventh off Joe Blanton (0-2), with first baseman Daric Barton bobbling the ball briefly as pinch-runner Jamey Carroll scored. Ryan Garko walked with the bases loaded after the A’s intentionally walked Grady Sizemore.

White Sox 13, Tigers 2

At Detroit, Nick Swisher homered on the game’s second pitch, Carlos Quentin had four RBIs and Chicago handed Detroit its sixth straight loss.

Despite the second-highest payroll in the majors, the winless Tigers are off to their worst start since going 0-9 at the beginning of 2003.

Mark Buehrle (1-0) held the Tigers to two runs and seven hits in seven innings.

Justin Verlander (0-1) allowed a career-high nine runs—four earned—in 5 2-3 innings. He gave up seven hits and walked three, striking out four.

Reds 8, Phillies 2

At Cincinnati, Ken Griffey Jr.

hit his 594th career homer, a two-run shot that powered the Cincinnati Reds over the Philadelphia Phillies.

Griffey’s first homer of the season, a drive off Brett Myers (0-1), left him six shy of becoming the sixth player in major league history to reach 600 homers. He would join Barry Bonds, Hank Aaron, Babe Ruth, Willie Mays and Sammy Sosa.

Jeff Keppinger homered and drove in three runs for the Reds, and Edinson Volquez (1-0) struck out eight in 5 1-3 innings.

Brewers 7, Giants 0

At Milwaukee, Ben Sheets (1-0) struck out eight, walked none and pitched a five-hitter for his second career shutout, his first since a five-hitter against St. Louis on May 29, 2001. He retired his last 10 batters.

Ryan Braun fell a triple short of the cycle, going 3-for-5 with three RBIs and Gabe Kapler homered for the second time in as many days as the Brewers scored in the second, third, fourth and fifth innings off Barry Zito (0-2), who allowed five runs—three earned—and eight hits in five innings. Zito has a 6.30 ERA.

Diamondbacks 5, Rockies 2

At Denver, Mark Reynolds hit a two-run homer in the ninth off Manny Corpas and Stephen Drew hit a tiebreaking drive against Micah Bowie (0-1) leading off a three-run 10th as Arizona completed a three-game sweep against the Colorado team that beat it 4-0 in last year’s NL

Championship Series.

Colorado, which lost its fifth straight, led 1-0 before Reynolds homered. Matt Holliday homered in the ninth off Brandon Lyon (1-1), who blew his second save chance.

Chad Qualls walked the first two batters in the 10th, then got his first save when Ryan Spilborghs grounded into double play and Troy Tulowitzki lined out.

Braves 3, Mets 1

At Atlanta, John Smoltz (1-0) allowed two hits over five scoreless innings in his season debut to beat Joahn Santana (1-1) as Atlanta completed a two-game sweep of New York in the rain-shortened series.

Santana gave up only one run in seven innings—Yunel Escobar doubled in Mark Kotsay in the third—and Mark Teixeira hit a two-run homer off Aaron Heilman in the eighth.

Ryan Church hit an RBI single with two outs in the ninth off Rafael Soriano, who completed a five-hitter and got his first save of the season when Teixeira made a diving stop of Brian Schneider’s sharp grounder to first.

Dodgers 3, Padres 2

At San Diego, Trevor Hoffman (0-2) allowed Chin-Lung Hu’s tiebreaking RBI single in the ninth inning for Los Angeles.

Hoffman, MLB’s career leader with 526 saves, has a 12.27 ERA in four games.

Jonathan Broxton (1-0) pitched 1 1-3 innings for the win, and Takashi Saito got three outs for his first save.

Cubs 3, Astros 2

At Chicago, Derrek Lee hit a tiebreaking homer against Oscar Villarreal (0-2) in the seventh for Chicago to beat Houston.

Carlos Zambrano (1-0) struck out seven in seven innings, allowing two runs and seven hits with no walks, and Kerry Wood pitched a perfect ninth for his third save.

Alfonso Soriano was 1-for-24 this season when homered off Brandon Backe for a 2-1 lead in the fifth. Miguel Tejada hit his first homer with Houston leading off the seventh.

Cardinals 3, Nationals 0

At St. Louis, Kyle Lohse (1-0) allowed four hits in seven innings, Rick Ankiel homered and St. Louis completed a three-game sweep.

Despite a major league-high nine players on the disabled list, the Cardinals are 5-1 for the first time since 2000.

Rookie John Lannan (0-1) allowed two runs in 6 2-3 innings for Washington, which has lost four in a row after a 3-0 start.

Pirates 9, Marlins 2

At Miami, Ian Snell (1-0) struck out 10 in six innings, allowing two runs—one earned—and four hits.

Xavier Nady homered, and Nate McLouth had three hits and scored three runs for Pittsburgh, which finished with 15 hits. Chris Gomez went 3-for-4.

Rick VandenHurk (0-1) gave up four runs and six hits in 2 1-3 innings for Florida.

Wagner wins Houston Open



HUMBLE, Texas (AP)—Johnson Wagner was watching highlights

from the 2002 Masters late Saturday night, and his wife scolded him for it.

Now, he has the chance to create some Augusta moments of his own.

Wagner won the Houston Open on Sunday for his first PGA Tour victory and got the ultimate bonus prize that comes with it—a spot next week in the Masters.

“Sounds funny, you know, even saying it,” Wagner said. “I don’t care if I shoot 90 both days and miss the cut. I’m so excited to be there and it’s just a dream come true.”

The 28-year-old Wagner shot a 1-under 71 to finish at 16 under, two shots ahead of Chad Campbell (72) and Geoff Ogilvy (68). Billy Mayfair and Fred Couples shot 66s and finished three shots back at 13 under. Bob Estes and Charley Hoffman, three behind Wagner at the start of the round, had 72s that left them four behind.

Wagner had missed six cuts in nine previous starts this year and was ranked 193rd on the money list when he arrived in Houston. He matched defending champion Adam Scott’s course-record 63 in the first round, then held the 36- and 54-hole leads at an event for the first time in 44 career starts.

Wagner tried to relax on Saturday night by watching the Final Four. After the games, he flipped to the Masters highlights and started imagining what it would be like to actually play there.

His wife, Katie, returned from a walk and chastised him for even thinking about Augusta before Sunday’s round.

“I thought to myself, that’s a good point,” Wagner said. “We hadn’t talked about it all week and I’m so glad now

body brought it up to me that’s close to me. Nobody said, ‘Hey, if you win, can I get a ticket to the Masters?’”

“It really helped me focus on not focusing on it.”

But it was there, in the back of his

stomach were churning as he tried to close out the victory.

“I was freaked out all today and yesterday,” Wagner said. “Warming up on the range (Sunday morning), I was very nervous but still tried to stay calm

While Wagner will play in his first Masters, Davis Love III will miss a major for the first time since 1990. Love had to win to qualify for Augusta, but he finished at 5 under, ending the longest active streak of major



Johnson Wagner tees off on the ninth hole during the final round of the Houston Open golf tournament Sunday, April 6, 2008 in Humble, Texas. AP

mind, and his emotions showed all day. Sweat soaked through his green shirt and he nervously wiped his hands with a white towel before most of his shots.

Wagner said he sweats all the time when he plays, but conceded that his

and breathe, just all day.”

Wagner held it together, pumping his fist after sinking a 6-foot par putt on the 72nd hole as his parents, wife and several family members cheered from behind the green.

appearances at 70.

Phil Mickelson now holds the longest run of major starts, with 55. Mickelson shot a second straight 71 on Sunday and finished at 6 under in his final tuneup before Augusta.

Nowitzki-led Mavs rallies in fourth quarter to stun Suns



PHOENIX (AP)—Dirk Nowitzki scored 32 points and the Dallas Mavericks rallied from a 13-point fourth quarter deficit for a crucial 105-98 victory over the Phoenix Suns in the NBA on Sunday.

Josh Howard added 24 for the Mavericks, who used a smothering defense in a 16-0 run that put them ahead for good in a game the Suns had led nearly throughout. Phoenix went scoreless for just under 8 minutes, missing 12 shots in the process.

Nowitzki scored 12 in the fourth quarter, when Dallas outscored Phoenix 27-9.

Amare Stoudemire had 31 points and Steve Nash 14 points and 10 assists for the Suns.

Hornets 108, Warriors 96

At New Orleans, Chris Paul had 16 points, 13 assists and 10 rebounds, and New Orleans tied a franchise record for single-season victories with its 54th.

It was the fourth career triple double for Paul, and the Hornets won their 11th straight home game and fourth straight overall.

Monta Ellis scored 35 points to lead Golden State.

Peja Stojakovic and David West each

scored 25 points, helping New Orleans close the game on an 18-6 run after Golden State had rallied to tie the game at 90 early in the fourth quarter.

Pistons 91, Heat 75

At Miami, Rodney Stuckey scored 19 points and Detroit wrapped up the No. 2 seed for the Eastern Conference playoffs with their fifth straight win.

Earl Barron scored 20 points for Miami, which lost its seventh straight.

Spurs 72, Trail Blazers 65

At Portland, Oregon, Tim Duncan had 27 points and 11 rebounds and San Antonio won its 12th straight against Portland.

Manu Ginobili’s dunk with 1:31 left all but sealed it for the Spurs, who handed the Blazers their fifth consecutive loss.

All-Star guard Brandon Roy, who returned after a four-game absence because of a groin injury, led the Blazers with 18 points. LaMarcus Aldridge added 12 points and 11 rebounds.

Pacers 105, Bucks 97

At Indianapolis, Travis Diener scored 15 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter, and Indiana beat Milwaukee to remain in the Eastern Conference playoff hunt.

Diener made five of six 3-pointers in the final period. Danny Granger had 27 points, and Jeff Foster had a season-high 16 points and 15 rebounds for the Pacers.

Michael Redd led Milwaukee with 24 points and Charlie Villanueva added 22 points and 13 rebounds for the Bucks.

The Pacers trail the Atlanta Hawks by three games for the eighth playoff spot in the East with five games to play. Indiana hosts Atlanta on Tuesday.

Grizzlies 113, Timberwolves 101

At Minneapolis, Mike Miller scored 34 points and hit a season-high eight 3-pointers to help Memphis hand Minnesota its fourth straight loss.

Rudy Gay added 23 points and Hakim Warrick had 20 for the Grizzlies.

The teams traded the lead heading into the final minutes of the fourth quarter until Memphis sparked an 21-6 run by converting two consecutive three-point plays.

Ryan Gomes led Minnesota with 19 points and Al Jefferson had 18.

Knicks 100, Magic 90

At New York, rookie Wilson Chandler scored a season-high 23 points, Zach Randolph added 20 points and 11 re-

bounds, and New York snapped a five-game losing streak.

Hedo Turkoglu scored 22 points for Orlando, which will have the No. 3 seed in the Eastern Conference playoffs. After winning at Cleveland on Saturday, the Magic seemed to run out of gas late in this one after trailing by two with 8 1/2 minutes left.

Lakers 114, Kings 92

At Sacramento, California, Kobe Bryant scored 29 points, Vladimir Radmanovic matched his season high with 21 and the Lakers downed Sacramento to stay on track for the Pacific Division title.

Radmanovic hit five 3-pointers and tied his career high with 14 rebounds, while Pau Gasol added 20 points and nine rebounds for the Lakers, who won their fourth straight. They snapped their longtime rivals’ four-game winning streak with an outstanding second half, including a 23-9 run in the third quarter led by three of Bryant’s four 3-pointers.

Kevin Martin scored 22 points for the Kings, who simply seemed exhausted after winning at Denver one night earlier.

Rockets 105, Clippers 79

At Los Angeles, rookie reserve Aaron Brooks scored 18 points, five teammates reached double figures, and Houston

“It was a good week for me to identify what I need to work on and find out what areas don’t feel great,” Mickelson said. “My chipping and putting aren’t where they need to be. Fortunately, I can spend extra time on it now, the next couple of days leading into the Masters.”

This day belonged to Wagner, the 13th player to earn his first victory in Houston.

He started one ahead of Campbell, then opened a three-shot lead when he sank a 26-foot birdie on the second hole and Campbell three-putted. Wagner led by five after a birdie on the fourth. Campbell hit into the fairway bunker off the tee and bogeyed again.

Campbell drove into the fairway bunker on No. 8, then dumped his second shot into the water, leading to a crippling double bogey. Wagner birdied again to get to 17 under.

Ogilvy birdied Nos. 3, 5 and 8 to move into second place, but Wagner led by four at the turn.

Couples, the 2003 champion when the tournament was played at the members’ course across the street, was one of several players who mounted charges on the back nine.

Wagner bogeyed the 10th and Couples and Mayfair both birdied 13 and 15, the last two par 5s, to move to 13 under, tying Ogilvy. Campbell bounced back with three straight birdies on 11, 12 and 13 to get to 14 under. Estes also birdied the 11th and 12th to reach 14 under.

But Wagner hung on, as the players chasing him stalled, one after another.

Wagner left a long birdie putt short on the par-4 17th, but he calmly sank the 11-footer to stay at 16 under. He drove his last tee shot into the fairway bunker, avoiding the ominous pond that runs down the left side of the 18th hole.

“It’s not where I wanted to hit it,” he said. “It was the safe alternative to the big lake on the left.”

Wagner became the second wire-to-wire winner since the tournament moved to the Tournament Course at Redstone in 2006. Stuart Appleby led from the start when he won in 2006.

beat the Los Angeles clippers to clinch a playoff berth.

Rookie Luis Scola scored 16 points, Luther Head added 15, Tracy McGrady had 13 points, eight rebounds and nine assists, Bobby Jackson had 12 points, five rebounds and four assists, and Shane Battier scored 11 for the Rockets, who shot 48.1 percent and out-rebounded the Clippers 51-33.

Josh Powell had a career-high 22 points and 10 rebounds for the Clippers (23-54), who have lost 21 of their last 25 games.

SuperSonics 151, Nuggets 147, 2OT

At Seattle, Kevin Durant scored a season-high 37 points and fellow rookie Jeff Green had a season-high 35 as Seattle damaged Denver’s playoff hopes.

Green, whose previous high was 23 points, scored 24 in the second half and overtime. His five quick points to start the second overtime gave the draft lottery-bound Sonics (18-59) the winning cushion.

Carmelo Anthony, who scored 47 points Saturday in a loss to Sacramento, led the Nuggets with 38 points. Allen Iverson added 26 points and Kenyon Martin had 22. The loss kept the Nuggets in a tie with Golden State for the eighth and final playoff spot in the Western Conference.

Three-island competition to become the norm

By MARK RABAGO

mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
ASSISTANT EDITOR



Guam ping-pong players thoroughly enjoyed the 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament held last March 29 and 30 at the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino that they are expected back later this year for the final tournament of the twice-a-year competition.

In an email to the *Saipan Tribune*, Marianas Amateur Table Tennis Association spokesperson Budhi Gurung said that Hisamitsu Hamamoto, Carlos Gumataotao, and Edmund Ho of the Guam Amateur Table Tennis Association will definitely be back for the 10th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament set for September or October this year on Saipan.

"Guam players promised that they will practice regularly to be more consistent so that they may perform better when they come to Saipan to join the second and final round of the competition at the end of this year," he said.

The Nepalese ping-pong player added that finally having Guam in the mix makes the level of competition better for the goodwill series.

"It really seems that our upcoming table tennis tournaments will be more competitive in the

near future as we challenge each other. It is a golden opportunity for all of us to share our experiences and skills," said Gurung who works for Sablan Topline.

Tinian A won the 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament, dropping only four games in 40 head-to-head matches against two teams from Saipan, Guam, and their sister team, Tinian B. The team competition was held in the event's first day, March 29.

Saipan A, meanwhile, finished runner-up with Guam taking third place and Tinian B and Saipan B finishing fourth and fifth.

In the singles competition held the following day, May 30, Tinian A's Mark Ma got the better of Saipan A's Jean Shi in four sets, 12-10, 5-11, 11-8, 13-11. Saipan A's Su Yong Dong, meanwhile, salvaged third place with a 13-15, 11-9, 11-9, 11-8 victory over Luke Lu of Tinian A.

In the doubles, Ma and Tinian B's Liang Wei Bin teamed up to defeat Shi and Su, 7-12, 12-10, 11-4, 11-5. Luke and Robin Lu of Saipan A settled for third place.

Paddlers from the CNMI's gambling capital thus successfully defended the goodwill championship it won in April 2007 when only two teams representing Tinian and Saipan battled for the championship. Saipan avenged the loss, by winning the second round late last year.



Top, Saipan and Tinian teams pose for a group shot during the awards ceremony of the 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament held last March 30 at the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Left, Saipan and Guam teams pose for a group shot during the awards ceremony of the 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament held last March 30 at the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Tinian, Saipan, and Guam teams pose for a group shot during the awards ceremony of the 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament held last March 30 at the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



The Tinian A and Tinian B teams pose for a photo during the awards ceremony of the 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament held last March 30 at the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Tinian A's Mark Ma receives his singles championship trophy after winning the division over Saipan A's Jean Shi during the awards ceremony of the 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament held last March 30 at the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino. Ma is flanked by Steven Lim, MATTA president, and Alfred Yue, Tinian ping-pong club official.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Saipan A's Su Yong Dong receives his second runner-up trophy during the awards ceremony of the 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament held last March 30 at the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Saipan A's Jean Shi receives her runner-up trophy during the awards ceremony of the 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament held last March 30 at the Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



Three-island competition to become the norm

Guam ping-pong players thoroughly enjoyed the 9th Goodwill Table Tennis Tournament held last March 29 and 30 Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino that they are expected back later this year for the final tournament of the twice-a-year competition.

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Saipan Tribune Sports

IOC president concerned about Tibet

International Olympic Committee head Jacques Rogge said he was "very concerned" about unrest in Tibet, but downplayed talk of a boycott of the Beijing Games.

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Jon Salas making waves in Boise, Idaho

By JON PEREZ

jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

If Jonathan Salas was here and still playing for the Saipan Little League he could have helped his Big League division team whether in batting, pitching, or fielding.

Instead, the former Saipan Senior League All-Star is helping the Timberline High School Wolves return to the 5A State Championships in Boise, Idaho.

The eldest son of former Saipan Little League Baseball Association president Joe and Cathy Salas of Kagman III went straight to study in Boise after CNMI's third place finish in Pool A of the Senior League World Series in Bangor, Maine.

Salas tried out for the Wolves baseball team and was selected in its junior varsity squad where he played nine games for the 2005 SIC Champions before being elevated to the varsity level.

The Wolves varsity team has a solid program for the past eight years and they have won the SIC Championships four times and are also a three-time 5A State Champions.

Salas' impressive statistics in the JV team earned him a spot in the varsity after nine games. He was the Wolves' top batter in the JV level in 2007 going 13-for-24 for a .542 average and a .700 on base percentage.

He scored a total of 11 runs, made 10 RBIs, had four doubles, two triples, blasted one home run with seven stolen bases while striking out once and being walked five times to help the Wolves finish with an 11-1 record.

Salas was not only good in

batting as he also finished with a 2-0 record while pitching

nine innings for the Wolves, giving up no earned runs on two hits with five strikeouts, one walk, and one hit by pitch.

He is now in the lineup of the varsity team and has played in the Wolves' 3-1 win over Centennial last April 3. He went 1-for-5 with one RBI and struck out once in that game.

The Wolves currently hold a 12-2 record and are riding on a three-game

winning run after a 10-0 blanking of Centennial on April 4. The Wolves' last loss was a 3-4 setback against Florida last March 28.

Their next game is against visiting Columbia on April 8 and will travel to Caldwell on April 10 before hosting them again on April 11.

Salas' coach Larry Price has nothing but praises for the former Saipan Little Leaguer saying that he enjoys coaching him. "Jon is doing well with his new teammates. He just got brought up to

Jon Salas brings his Saipan Little League skills to Boise, Idaho to help the Timberline High School Wolves in the ongoing season of the 5A State Championships.

JON PEREZ

HANMI Cup finals set this Sunday



JON PEREZ

Alfred Fernandez, center, of the Pacific Islands Club splits the Aquarius Beach Tower defense in their second round game in the 2nd Annual HANMI Cup Inter-Hotel Basketball League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

By JON PEREZ

jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER



Pacific Islands Club has a score to settle against top seed Fiesta-Grand Hotel in Sunday's finals of the 2nd Annual HANMI Cup Inter-Hotel Basketball League at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Fiesta-Grand and PIC will face off in the HANMI Cup one-game finals on Sunday, See HANMI on Page 26



JON PEREZ

The Survivors forged a three-way tie with the San Antonio Dragons and Red Sox with their latest win against McDonald's in the Majors division of the Saipan Little League on Sunday at the Miguel Basa "Tan Ge" Pangelinan Field.

Camacho, Pirates tame Dragons in Majors

By JON PEREZ

jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER



Frankie Camacho pitched 1.2 innings in relief to help the Kautz Glass Pirates to a 7-4 win over the San Antonio Dragons in Sunday's Majors division game in the Saipan Little League at the Miguel Basa "Tan Ge" Pangelinan Field.

Camacho came in the top of the fifth with two outs with two runners on base and the Dragons holding on to a 4-2 lead. He struck out Nathan Camacho to end the inning.

The Pirates then made their comeback in the bottom of the fifth, scoring five runs to grab the lead giving Camacho the needed run support heading into the top of the sixth.

He struck out Dragons lead off batter Bo Barry to move the Pirates one out away from handing the San Antonio-based crew their second loss in eight matches.

A Pirates throwing error allowed Jared Cabrera to be safe on second while Steven Cabrera walked to put two runners on base.

But Jared and Steven were stranded after Camacho, who struck out four batters in 1.2 innings, fanned Misaki See CAMACHO on Page 26

Ol'Aces hand Jets second loss

By JON PEREZ

jon_perez@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The UMDA Ol'Aces grounded the Jets on Saturday pulling off a 9-6 win in their Junior League division game in the Saipan Little League at the Francisco M. Palacios Baseball Field.

The Ol'Aces used a five-run third-inning scoring rally then held off the Jets' comeback tries to secure their second win in six games to remain in third place in the five-team field.

The Jets suffered their second straight loss but remained on top of the standings with a league-best seven wins. The Jets were on a seven-game winning streak when the Kagman Lion Hearts ended it with a 6-4 win last April 1.

The Lion Hearts of Reps. Ed Salas and Rosmond Santos is in second

place with a 5-2 mark followed by Ol'Aces (2-4), Fielders (1-3), and the PTI Dolphins (0-1).

Lamar Iguel pitched a complete game and was tagged with 11 hits with three strikeouts, and two walks.

Kevin Yamada went 2-for-4 with one run and RBI, while Rocco Reyes also went 2-for-4 and scored a run for the Ton Flores-managed Ol'Aces.

SENIOR LEAGUE Fielders 13, Dolphins 6

Ryan Ada, who is a member of the Senior League All-Star team that played in the World Series last year, homered and went perfect at the plate to lead the Tan Holdings Fielders to a 13-6 crushing of the PTI Dolphins.

The win improved the Fielders' slate to an even 3-3 mark, while the See OL'ACES on Page 26